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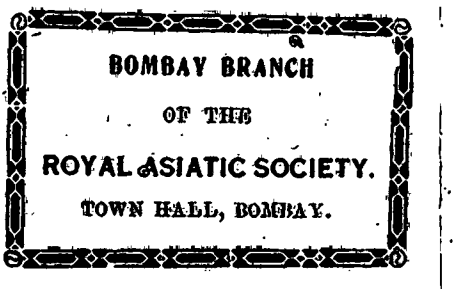

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MADME DE MAINTENON.

FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE VERSAILLES GALLERY.

London Richard Bentley 1841

LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH,

AND

THE COURT OF FRANCE

IN

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN," ETC.

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TO

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THE ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD BY G. AND W. MEASOM.

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LOUIS XIV,

AND THE

COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

INCREASING FAVOUR OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN — THE CROWN OF AGRIPPINA— PUERILITY OF MONSIEUR—MADAME SCARRON—GENEROSITY OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—MADAME SCARRON GOUVERNANTE—DISGUST OF LOUIS XIV. TO ST. GERMAIN—SUPERSTITIOUS TERRORS—BIRTH OF THE DUKE DU MAINE—THE BABY ABBOT—THE NEW MARQUISE—PORTRAIT OF MADAME DE MAINTENON BY LA VALLIÈRE—WRETCHEDNESS OF LA VALLIÈRE—HARSHNESS OF LOUIS XIV.—SECOND FLIGHT OF LA VALLIÈRE TO A CONVENT—A NIGHT WITH THE CARMELITES—MISSION OF M. COLBERT—OSTENTATION OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—INDIGNATION OF THE CLERGY—M. DE BOSSUET AND THE FAVOURITE—THE AFRICAN EMBASSY—THE "SECOND" WIFE OF THE SOVEREIGN—THE MISSIONARIES—THE BLACK DWARF—ACCOUCHEMENT OF THE QUEEN—THE NEW DUCHESS D'ORLEANS—HER RECEPTION AT THE FRENCH COURT—HER PORTRAIT BY HER OWN HAND—HER PERSONAL HABITS—HER SELF-RESPECT—LAUZUN AT PIGNEROL—FOUQUET AND LAUZUN—THE DUKE DE LONGUEVILLE.

THE increasing passion of Louis XIV. for Madame de Montespan contributed in no slight degree to console him for the untimely death of the unfortunate Duchess

d'Orleans; and superadded to the horror which he entertained of all ideas connected with such events as tended to remind him of his mortality, soon enabled him to throw aside every sign of mourning, whether external or mental. The favour of his new mistress became more assured from day to day; the fascinations of her wit, the gorgeousness of her beauty, and even the exactions of her capricious vanity, all rendered her triumph more complete; and meanwhile la Vallière could no longer conceal even from herself that her days of happiness were at an end.

Among her other expensive tastes, the new favourite had a most inordinate passion for jewels. While yet a girl she had delighted in diamonds and precious stones; and the generosity of the king upon this point was so unmeasured, that, after her disgrace, she herself declared that she possessed a collection worthy of an Asiatic prince; and that even were she to be deprived of the whole of her fortune, save her pearls and diamonds, she could still command opulence.

This taste was shared by Louis XIV, who in his private cabinet had two immense pedestals of rosewood, fitted in the interior with shifting shelves, in which he kept the most precious of the crown-jewels, in order that he might examine and admire them at his ease, an occupation in which he took great delight; nor did he ever hear of a gem of price, either in Asia or Europe, without making strenuous efforts to secure the prize.

His most costly possession was, however, the famous crown of Agrippina, a work of consummate art, composed of eight tiers of immense brilliants in a transparent setting; and after having overwhelmed the insatiable marchioness with pearls, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds,

and rubies, he one day permitted her to carry to her own apartment this priceless coronet; where it remained for so long a period unreclaimed that she at length began to feel convinced that it had been a gift; and fearful of accident should she leave it in the slight casket which it then occupied, she ordered another to be made more suited to its value. This done, and the imperial crown safely deposited in its new case, and secured by several minute locks, she deposited her treasure in the chest which contained her other jewels, where she visited it from time to time, and always with increased admiration.

When the Princess of Modena passed through France on her way to England, where she was about to become the wife of the Duke of York, Louis XIV. gave her a magnificent reception; and as she was young and handsome, nothing was left unattempted to gratify and amuse her during her brief sojourn at the court.

It chanced that upon one occasion the conversation of the king's circle turned upon regal decorations, and particularly upon the various forms and fashions of crowns; when the Marquis de Dangeau, who prided himself upon his antiquarian knowledge, observed that it was in the time of Nero the imperial crown was first arched; to which the monarch replied that he had not been aware of the fact, but that the crown of his mother was entirely open; adding, that he possessed one himself which was authentic, and which the Marchioness de Montespan would give them the opportunity of examining.

Thus summoned to drag her hidden treasure into light, the disconcerted favourite found herself compelled to go in search of the glittering circlet; and after an absence

of a few minutes, she placed it upon a small table, where it excited universal attention and enthusiasm. The Italian princess, the Duke de St. Aignan, M. de Dangeau, and the other courtiers who were present, lost themselves in hyperbole on the brilliant water, equal size, and rare perfection of the matchless diamonds; but when the king, raising it in his hand, obtained a closer and more perfect view of the jewels, he immediately fixed his eyes sternly upon the marchioness, exclaiming, "How is this, madam? This is no longer my crown of Agrippina; all the stones have been changed!" Madame de Montespan turned pale, and trembled; but having in her turn examined the coronet closely, she found herself compelled to admit that such was indeed the fact. The setting was still intact, but the antique brilliants had been replaced by paste.

On arriving at this conviction the appalled favourite had nearly fallen to the ground, and it required all the expostulations of those by whom she was surrounded to enable her to preserve herself from fainting; while the king at once declared that, let the substitution have been made as it might, no one could for a moment attach any suspicion to herself; and she then felt compelled to explain the circumstance of the new casket, which she had caused to be made for the greater security of the coronet.

She had no sooner told her tale than Louis XIV. turned with a smile to the Princess of Modena, requesting her to relate the adventure at the English court, and to inform the king, in his name, that nothing was at the present moment so difficult to preserve as a crown, for that even guards and locks no longer sufficed; and then addressing Madame de Montespan, he added, that she would have

acted more wisely in committing it sooner to his own custody, as he should have acquitted himself tolerably well in such an office.

The honour of Madame de Montespan was, however, involved in this unhappy incident; and she had no sooner retired to her own apartments than she summoned the whole of her attendants, not even excepting her steward, and complained bitterly of the mortification to which she had been subjected in the presence of the king; but she detected only regret and consternation upon the faces by which she was surrounded; until the steward suddenly reminded her that she would do well to invoke the aid of the authorities; for that there could exist no doubt that the fraud had been committed by the maker of the casket.

He was immediately sought for; but, on arriving at his house, the officers were informed that he had left Paris more than two years; and that, having been unsuccessful in some commercial speculations, he had disposed of his business, and with the slender remains of his property had emigrated to Pondichery. It was, however, ascertained that he had affected an attachment for one of the waiting women of the marchioness, who had, during his visits, allowed him free access to the whole of her apartments; where the crown of Agrippina, which he valued at as high a price as its temporary mistress, had proved too strong a temptation for his honesty.

He was ultimately taken and hanged; upon which occasion Louis XIV. endeavoured to console Madame de Montespan with the remark; "He has at least left us the setting, but Cromwell would have seized it whole."[1]

We have, however, digressed.

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

Monsieur, as easily consoled as his brother, no sooner found himself freed from the foul suspicion which had for an instant weighed so heavily upon him, than he sought occupation for his thoughts, and a veil for his indifference, in the ostentatious arrangements of his mourning, and the etiquette necessary to be observed under the circumstances; but many sincere tears were nevertheless shed, not only by the court, but even by the people, for the martyred princess, so cruelly sacrificed to individual vengeance. She left no son, but two daughters, one of whom subsequently married the Duke of Savoy; and a second, who unhappily inherited both the attractions and the misfortunes of her mother.

Madame had been but a short time dead when Louis XIV. proposed to MADEMOISELLE to become her successor; a suggestion which only a few months previously would have too greatly flattered her ambition to have been rejected; but her love for Lauzun had now grown into an absorbing sentiment, by which all other feelings were subjugated, and she at once declined the alliance.

Meanwhile the poet Scarron had left his young widow almost penniless; and to add to her embarrassment, all the pensions granted by the queen-mother having been discontinued at her death, she found herself once more reduced to labour for her support. Vainly had she addressed petitions to the king, and memorials to the ministers; her applications had one and all remained without reply; when Madame de Montespan, who had made her acquaintance in the brilliant circles of the hôtel de Richelieu and the hôtel d'Albret, chancing to hear of her necessities, desired a friend to direct Madame Scarron to wait upon her, in order that she might serve her interests with the king.

Little did the haughty beauty suspect that this exercise of her generosity would produce the same effect upon her own fortunes, as the affection of the betrayed la Vallière for herself had wrought in those of the now neglected favourite.

The necessitous young widow lost no time in availing herself of the invitation of the powerful marchioness. She was no longer the brilliant woman who had shed a new lustre over the circle of a poet, but dressed in deep, and even conventual mourning, crushed by poverty, and avowing that her position was one of pain and difficulty. When interrogated on the steps which she had taken to obtain the survivorship of her husband's pension, she said sadly, that she feared some prejudice existed against her in high quarters, as all her applications had remained without reply; and that under these circumstances she had just formed a resolution which she trusted would be approved by the marquise.

M. Scarron, although apparently rich, possessed only a life income; and at his death his debts exceeded the value of his personal property; so that, after having done all in her power to satisfy his creditors, his widow had found herself utterly without the means of existence; and had accordingly accepted a proposal made by[1] the

[1] Mademoiselle d'Aumale, daughter of the Duke de Nemours, of the house of Savoy. She was fair, tolerably well looking, but short in stature; and her head, which was too large for her body, was full of plots and stratagems. Married to the heir apparent of the Portuguese throne, she bestowed her affections on his brother, Don Pedro; and eventually, by her machinations, she accomplished his imprisonment as a lunatic; a measure which his own intemperate passions rendered only too easy of accomplishment. She became the wife of his successor under the sanction of a papal bull.

Princess de Nemours, that she should accompany her to Lisbon on her marriage with Don Alphonso of Braganza, in the capacity of secretary and companion; with the assured prospect of a great alliance, and an appointment as lady of honour.

From this project she was, however, easily dissuaded by Madame de Montespan, who reminded her of the sufferings of her former exile, and the possibility of a failure in the promises of the princess, which would once more leave her helpless in a foreign country; and desired her immediately to draw up a new petition, signed with her maiden name of d'Aubigny, which she would herself present to the king, and whose success she would guarantee. This done, the friends parted; the petition was placed in the hands of Louis XIV; and the pension of two thousand francs which had been granted to her by the queen-mother three years before her death, was restored. Madame Scarron had the honour of an interview with the king; and the voyage to Lisbon was abandoned, greatly to the displeasure of the affianced princess.

The generosity of Madame de Montespan had not, however, been altogether disinterested. The various accomplishments of the widow of Scarron had at once convinced her that she could select no more eligible governess for her children; while the obligation which Madame Scarron had contracted to the marquise, assured the latter alike of her zeal and her discretion. The favourite had, consequently, no sooner seen the Portuguese queen depart for her new country, than she suggested to the king the expediency of securing the services of her *protégée;* but Louis XIV, who had been repelled by the extreme gravity and reserve of the young

widow, for some time refused to sanction the arrangement, which he finally conceded with a reluctance equalled by that of Madame Scarron herself, who, having retired to the Marais, had turned her thoughts to devotion. The will of the king was, however, omnipotent, and a new residence was accordingly provided for her in the midst of the vast nursery-grounds which existed at that period between Vaugirard and the palace of the Luxembourg; a liberal establishment was formed; and the devout widow was installed in the onerous office of gouvernante of Madame de Montespan's children.

About this time, Louis XIV. conceived an invincible repugnance to the palace of St. Germain, despite its internal luxury, and the varied and noble views which it commanded on all sides. The river that wound its capricious waters through the immense plain; the multitude of châteaux scattered in every direction, amid which were cleared the hunting-paths necessary to the convenience of his sport; the lofty calvary; the bridges flung here and there across the stream to increase the beauty of the perspective; the grassy meadows, upon whose green expanse the eye loved to repose; and the moving bason of the Seine flowing beneath the windows of the edifice, had all lost their charm; and this fact existed in the secret of his firm belief that a short time previous to the death of Anne of Austria, as he was pacing the terrace alone, he had seen a red light play about the towers of St. Denis, which had no sooner settled above their summits, than in the midst of this unnatural vapour, a dark cloud collected, and, ere long, assumed the form of a hearse, surmounted by the arms of Austria; while immediately before the decease of the

Duchess d'Orleans, the same towers had appeared to him in a dream, and in the midst of the fire, a skeleton holding in its hand the jewels of a woman. Thenceforward, the sight of St. Denis, distant as the abbey was, rendered the view from St. Germain odious to him; and only rendered him the more determined to make of Versailles so glorious a residence that he should never be enabled to look back with regret to the other palaces he might abandon; a resolution which was strengthened by the death, during the same year, of both the female children of the queen, who were, in their turn, deposited in the same royal necropolis.[1]

On the 31st March, 1670, Madame de Montespan gave birth to a second son, who was baptized by the names of Louis Augustus de Bourbon, receiving, moreover, the worldly appellation of Duke du Maine; and the same affectation of secrecy was observed upon this occasion, as on the birth of the Count de Vexin, his elder brother; Madame de Scarron, to whom the king was gradually becoming more reconciled, awaiting in an adjoining saloon the birth of the child, which was no sooner in the world, than she concealed it beneath her mantle, and conveyed it to her own residence.

In the course of the following year, the rich Abbey of St. Germain des Prés having become vacant, Louis XIV. appointed the Count de Vexin its abbot, to the extreme disgust of the Benedictine community, who could not restrain their indignation on thus finding themselves placed under the control of a child barely escaped from his cradle; and the king found it necessary to desire the grand almoner to visit the brotherhood, and to remind

[1] Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

them that, under preceding reigns, they had abbots who were married princes, and even soldiers; a precedent, as the prelate remarked to them, worse than reprehensible, and which His Majesty was incapable of renewing; while, as regarded the extreme youth of the prince whom he had selected, it could not prejudice their interests in any way, since His Highness would be efficiently represented by his vicar-general, until he had attained a fitting age to exercise his authority in person.

The community, silenced but not convinced, were fain to accept their new superior; and the pious heart of Madame Scarron leaped for joy as, a few days subsequently, she presented the princely abbot in full monastic costume to his admiring parents; caused the crosier, the mitre, and the cross, to be painted on the panels of his coach, and obtained the appointment of vicar-general for one of her own devout friends.

A short time subsequently, Madame de Montespan succeeded in removing from the mind of the king the prejudice which he had imbibed against the gouvernante; and this was no sooner accomplished, than he inquired of the lady if she could, without regret, lay aside the name of Scarron, so ill-suited to her grace and beauty; when, upon her assurance that her feelings towards her late husband had never exceeded those of esteem and gratitude, he presented to her the sum of one hundred thousand crowns, with which to purchase the princely estate of Maintenon, with its dependent marquisate; and, this done, he publicly addressed her as Madame de Maintenon.

"I can scarcely describe Madame Scarron;" says la Vallière, usually so gentle and so indulgent; and whose

evidence is consequently the more valuable, as it may be supposed to be the least prejudiced; "the word prude would be applicable to her, but that is a mere shade. She is at once a bigot and a *bel esprit*. She is naturally very formal and straight-laced, but nevertheless she has been seen enacting the very humble servant of Madame de Montespan, her reader, and her submissive friend. She is of a piety which appears all of a piece, alike stiff and inflexible; yet, notwithstanding, this piety has bent beneath the will of the king, and has found its joints. Madame Scarron is an admirable woman, for whom a specific term should be invented. . . . When she first appeared at court, her robe of serge, her plain linen, and her black lace, exhaled such an odour of pedantry, that her very appearance gave the king the vapours. Suppleness and patience are, however, admirable qualities, which operate wonderful conversions! She now has her horses, her hôtel, and a suite of servants; she is no longer the governess of the children of Madame de Montespan, but of those of the king, which her confessor declares to be quite a different thing. This is what she has been clever enough to accomplish."[1]

The slight tinge of bitterness perceptible in this sketch may well be pardoned, when it is remembered that at the period of Madame Scarron's advent at court, the wretched la Vallière was no longer able to cling to the self-delusion by which she had hitherto been supported. She now saw her position in its true light; and, ceasing to be blinded by the excess of her own passion, or by the accessories which had so long veiled, at least a portion of its disgrace, she was compelled to gaze steadily

[1] Mémoires de La Vallière.

upon the frightful truth. She had sacrificed her youth, her conscience, her fair fame, her peace; and what remained to her? She had trusted to the assertion of Louis on the birth of her daughter, that thenceforth nothing could alienate his affection from her; and already it was not only to herself that he had given a rival, but also to her innocent children. She saw the hollowness and egotism of the idol to which she had clung so trustfully; and her grief was only the more bitter that neither wrong, nor contumely, nor desertion, could diminish her love.

Such was her state of mind, when, on one occasion, the king entered her apartment, and finding her drowned in tears, with considerable harshness inquired the cause of such weak and ungoverned grief; and then, crushed by the cold tone and the stern eye of the estranged monarch, her full heart poured itself out before him with that wild eloquence which so often lends a grandeur even to the despair of error; but the days had long passed by in which the hand of Louis had been prompt to wipe away her tears, and to soothe her sorrows! Both the one and the other had now become importunate; and the only reply which they elicited was even more cruel than his previous inquiry.

"Let there be an end of this, Madam;" he said, as he stopped haughtily beside her; "I love you, and you know it; but I will not be constrained."

This interview was followed by a second, in which the king reproached Madame de la Vallière with her obstinacy in refusing the friendship of her rival; and reminded her that there had been a time in which she had herself required the countenance of her own sex.

This last, and most bitter humiliation decided the fate of the abandoned favourite. She bent her head in submissive silence, for her heart was bursting; and thenceforth her resolution was taken.

In a few days she completed all her arrangements; and addressed a letter to the king in which she confessed her inability to remain an inhabitant of the court when she had ascertained that she had lost both his affection and his respect; and embracing her children, as she believed for the last time, she entered her carriage, and departed for the convent of Chaillot.

It was late in the evening when she drove under the sombre portal, and requested an interview with the abbess, who was well known to her; and to whom she exclaimed as she entered the apartment; "Madam, I have no longer a home in a palace, may I hope to find one in the cloister?"

The abbess, to whom she told the whole tale of her bitter sorrow, received her like a christian, and at once acceded to her request; and after they had for a time mingled their tears together, la Vallière was conducted to the cell in which she was to pass the night. But for her there was no rest; she could not pray, although she cast herself upon her knees beside the narrow pallet, and strove to rejoice that she had at length escaped from the trials of a world which had wearied of her, and of which she herself was weary. There was no peace, no joy in her rebel heart; she thought of the first days of her happiness; of her children who on the morrow would ask for her in vain; and then as memory swept over her throbbing brain, she remembered her former flight to Chaillot, and that it was the king himself who

had led her back again into the world. Her brow burnt as the question forced itself upon her—would he do so a second time? Would he once more hasten, as he had then done, to rescue her from the living death to which she had consigned herself as an atonement for her past errors? But hour after hour went by, and all was silent. Hope died within her, and yet she could not pray; daylight streamed dimly into the narrow casement of her cell; and soon the measured step of the abbess fell upon her ear, as she advanced up the long gallery, striking upon the door of each cell as she approached; and uttering in a solemn voice; "Let us bless the Lord;" to which appeal each of the sisters replied in turn: "I give him thanks."

Such was the commencement of the first conventual day of the unhappy penitent—she alone could not at that moment give thanks even to her GOD, among all who were collected beneath that holy roof: she alone was still encouraging a hope that she might be once more torn from the steps of his altar, and gifted with a mere earthly love. Nor was her hope deceived. Louis XIV. found it easy to abandon his favourites, but he could not brook their abandonment; and he consequently no sooner received the letter of his fugitive mistress than he despatched M. Colbert to Chaillot with a letter entreating her immediate return. As the sound of carriage-wheels within the precincts of the convent reached her in her gloomy cell, the heart of la Vallière bounded—He was there! Once more he had come to claim her! and all her mortifications, all her cares, and even all her remorse forgotten on the instant, she rushed to the parlour, where she found only

the minister awaiting her. For an instant her head swam, and her heart sank; but in the next the letter of the king was in her hands, and her eyes eagerly devouring every line: nothing could be more tender, nothing more touching than its contents; but even as she read she remembered that on a former occasion he had been his own messenger, and she hesitated.

Colbert perceiving her indecision, assured her that he dared not return alone; coupling the assurance with a lively picture of the distress exhibited by Louis when her flight had been made known to him. Colbert was eloquent, and la Vallière subjugated by her still unextinguished passion; and thus, even while blushing at her own weakness, she at length consented to emerge a second time from the retreat in which she was to have buried alike her sorrow and her fault: but a dark misgiving still weighed upon her spirit; and as she wrung the hand of the abbess at parting, she murmured amid her tears; "This is not a farewell. I shall assuredly return; and perchance speedily."

Her first welcome was, however, well calculated to allay all her fears. The king shed tears as he strained her to his heart, and thanked her for her generous compliance with his entreaties; Madame de Montespan wept over her, as over one whom she loved, and had believed to be lost to her for ever; and the imitative courtiers crowded her saloons, and once more made her the idol of the hour.

La Vallière almost succeeded in persuading herself for a time that she had regained the lost affections of the fickle monarch; she had yet to learn that there is no resurrection for a dead passion; and that the marchioness

was a rival little likely to permit her the opportunities necessary for the trial. Even while affecting to disguise her power over the king, Madame de Montespan assumed a position at court ill-suited alike to her real rank, and to the respect which she owed to the queen her mistress; and in her château of Clagny,[1] where she was surrounded by luxury and state, she amused herself by entertaining foreign ambassadors, accepting at their hands costly presents, and introducing them to her children as though they had been princes of the blood royal of France. Yet, despite all these demonstrations, and the fact that the court had long ceased to be hoodwinked by the shallow mystery with which she had seen fit to surround herself, the deluded and credulous Maria Theresa still refused to believe in her guilt; the inuendoes of those about her, and even the anonymous letters by which she was assailed, failed equally to make her suspicious of a friend who had so openly and so bitterly condemned the errors of la Vallière; and the Count de Vexin was born, and the Duke du Maine had already been confided to the care of Madame Scarron, ere the unhappy and indignant queen was ultimately condemned to recognise this new treachery.

The voice of the church was, however, raised against the haughty favourite, even while the outraged wife wept over her wrongs in silence. A short time subsequent to the birth of the Duke du Maine, a general jubilee took place in France, involving the free pardon of all past sins, in consideration of certain prayers to be said, certain

[1] The superb château of Clagny was situated in the magnificent stretch of country which skirts the forest of Villars d'Avrai, beyond the boundaries of Versailles. It no longer exists.

visits to be paid to the several churches, and certain fasts to be observed. These great Papal absolutions, which were generally consequent upon the election of a new Pope, extended over all Roman Catholic countries, and excluded no sinner, however great might be his crimes, from their operation; and it was, consequently, almost with a delirious joy that these great festivals of pardon were welcomed by every class of the population.

The jubilee in question was no sooner officially announced in Paris, than the popular preachers commenced their labours by inveighing against the reprehensible excesses and illicit attachments by which the interests of religion were injured in the capital itself; and the very first sermon delivered before the court was emphatically directed against Madame de Montespan.

The second was still more uncompromising, and barely left her name unuttered; while in the third, the orator, directly addressing himself to the king, related the whole episode of David and the heifer which was stolen from him while he was yet a shepherd, and restored through the intervention of the patriarch of his tribe, who punished the thief; nor did he spare the subsequent passage in which David, become a monarch, carried off the wife of his servant, and excusing himself upon the plea of her beauty, was deaf to the voice of the injured husband, who besought him to yield rather to the dictates of justice than to those of passion, and to restore to him the wife of his bosom; but who was, nevertheless, compelled to suffer the penalty of his own disgrace, and perished miserably!

This plain speaking mortified Louis XIV, who dared not appear to appropriate the denunciation; and he accordingly desired the marchioness to withdraw during

the period of the jubilee to her château at Clagny, which she lost no time in doing; being equally anxious to escape from the unmeasured indignation of which she felt herself to be the object; but on the very day succeeding her arrival there, to her extreme annoyance, a servant announced the visit of M. de Bossuet,[1] the Bishop of Condom; who, after a somewhat stern salutation, laid before her the enormity of her position, and conjured her, not only for her own sake, but for that of the monarch, and the public, scandalized by her example, to retire immediately to the convent of Fontevrault; assuring her at the same time that the exhortations of the priesthood had effected the cure of the sinful passion which the king had hitherto indulged for her.

As, however, Madame de Montespan declined to profit by the pious advice of the bishop, he ultimately placed in her hands a letter from Louis himself, to the same purport; but even amid her agitation the marquise at once detected an ambiguity of expression which convinced her that the king by no means desired her obedience. Satisfied of this fact, she speedily recovered her self-possession; and when, after a tolerably long silence, the prelate requested to be informed of her defi-

[1] Jaques Bénigne de Bossuet, afterwards Bishop of Meaux, was born at Dijon in 1627. The extraordinary genius of his eloquence soon rendered him famous, especially his funeral orations, which were masterpieces of energy, sublimity, and christian boldness. Elected a member of the French Academy, he subsequently became the preceptor of the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV, for whom he wrote his *Discourse on Universal History*, and his *History of Variations*, both of which eminently exhibited the grasp and versatility of his genius. His religious controversies with Fenelon are not worthy of the same praise.

nitive resolution, in order that he might be enabled to communicate it to His Majesty without delay; the insolent favourite, after having established herself more luxuriously among the cushions of her *fauteuil*, raised her eyes steadily to his, and replied, with a smile upon her lips, that she was convinced of the sincerity of the holy men who had waited upon the king, when they endeavoured, as he had just expressed it, to induce His Majesty *to offer an example of self-abnegation to his people;* that, moreover, she was quite of their opinion; and that she thought as he did, as well as the Pope and the preachers of the jubilee; but, being imbued with the conviction that the shepherds owed it to their flock to point out the possibility of such a reformation, she, for one, would only consent to sacrifice the society of the monarch, when he, the Bishop of Condom, should have separated himself from that of Mademoiselle de Mauléon des Vieux.

For once, however, the malice of Madame de Montespan missed its aim. She had anticipated the discomfiture of her unwelcome visitor, but the undisturbed serenity of the bishop at once convinced her that the court-scandal had belied him, and only subjected her to a deeper humiliation; as the prelate, having contrasted her own licentiousness with the pure and pious life of the virtuous woman whom she had maligned, rose from his seat, and took his leave; observing that his errand was at an end, and that he had nothing more to do than to abandon her to her conscience, which, however, appeared so tranquil that he should reproach himself for any further attempt to awaken it.

A second letter, sent by a less holy messenger, reconciled Madame de Montespan to the mortification which

she had entailed upon herself by her own insolence; and she remained quietly at Clagny until a week after the close of the jubilee, when she was recalled to Versailles, where the king received her with every mark of affection and regard; her saloons were inundated with enthusiastic friends; her enemies left their names at her door; and her fauteuil, her cushions, and her praying-chair were replaced in the tribune of the chapel.[1]

We have alluded to the formal reception of certain ambassadors at Clagny by the marchioness; but it is necessary that we should be more explicit, as one of the results of the embassy in question was of a most melancholy nature. The African king of Arda, informed of the conquest of Candia by the French monarch, and anxious to secure so powerful a friend, despatched to his court several envoys to propose to him a political and commercial alliance; and to ask his support against the English and Dutch settlers upon his coasts. They were charged to present to Louis himself a tiger, a panther, and two superb lions; and to the queen a golden pheasant which possessed the faculty of laughing like a human being, and a Moorish dwarf, of upwards of ten years of age, whose height did not exceed twenty-seven inches. This duty performed, they next proceeded with the same state to wait upon Madame de Montespan, whom they addressed as *the second wife of the king;* and to whom they delivered, in the name of their own monarch, a string of large pearls, two bracelets of immense value, and an enormous sapphire.

The curiosity of the favourite being excited by their familiarity with her position at the court of France,

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

she inquired from whom they had derived their information; when they replied through their interpreter, that three travelling *missionaries* had resided for two months with the King of Arda, their master; and that these holy men had not only acquainted them with the fact that Madame de Montespan was the second wife of the great monarch; but had also themselves selected the presents which it was expedient to offer to her.

The queen, delighted at the new plaything with which the African envoys had provided her, caused the dwarf to be richly habited in the costume of his country, and covered him with jewels; after which she employed him to bear her train as she passed from one apartment to another; and derived great amusement from the liveliness of her pigmy attendant, who frequently diverted himself by suddenly stopping, and thus impeding her own progress; or in burying his head and face in the folds of the train to excite the mirth of the courtiers. All these antics, which differed so widely from the habitual monotony and ceremonial of her existence, were a source of continual delight to Maria Theresa, who retained the Moor constantly about her; and he was perpetually to be seen in her apartment, either gamboling upon the rich carpet, or perched upon the bureau,or seated on the sofa, or even upon the very lap of his royal mistress.

Instantly it became the fashion among the great ladies of the court to have Moorish dwarfs to carry their trains; and from this caprice, short as was its vogue, arises the fact that Mignard, le Bourdon, and other high-cast painters of the time, have introduced negro boys into their pictures.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. could not reconcile himself to this extraordinary favourite, whose appearance and familiarity were alike distasteful to him; but the queen clung so pertinaciously to her new toy, that he at length forbore all further remonstrance. Could he have foreseen the disastrous effects of his indulgence, much misery might have been spared, alike to himself and to the ill-fated Maria Theresa.

Osman was still in the zenith of his favour, when prayers were publicly put up for the safety of the queen, and of the new prince whom she was about to give to France; when, on one occasion, as she was traversing her chamber absorbed in thought, the dwarf, who was weary of inaction, suddenly bounded from an obscure corner of the apartment, and flung himself across her path. The queen fainted from the shock, and in a few hours gave birth to a daughter, perfectly black from head to foot. The secret was scrupulously kept by those in attendance; and after she had received a hurried baptism, the unfortunate child was privately conveyed to Gisors, whence she was afterwards removed to the Benedictine convent at Moret, where she was compelled to take the veil;[1] while the *Gazette de France* officially announced that the royal infant had died a few minutes subsequently to its baptism.[2]

Monsieur, wearied of his widowhood, after having, as we have shown, been rejected by MADEMOISELLE, once more appealed to the king to provide him with a second wife; and Louis XIV, in compliance with his request, demanded for him the hand of the Princess Palatine

[1] Her portrait is still to be seen in the winter saloon of the Library of St. Genevieve, College of Henry IV.

[2] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria; who, although fully aware of all the circumstances attending the death of her predecessor, at once accepted the alliance. Her advent at the French court created the greatest consternation. Only in the June of the previous year, its inmates had seen in the Duchess d'Orleans one of the most graceful and accomplished princesses in Europe, delicate to fastidiousness in her habits, young, elegant, and fascinating; and no contrast could be more striking than that presented by the new duchess, who was received with repugnance by *Monsieur*, and with reluctance by the king; but the alliance was dictated by policy, Louis XIV. being anxious to secure by this measure the neutrality of the Elector Palatine, the father of the princess, during the war which he meditated against the Dutch.

She had, according to Madame de Sévigné, coarse features, a heavy figure, robust health, and an indifference which almost amounted to aversion for dress, etiquette, and all such occupations as involved restraint. The portrait which she has drawn of herself in her memoirs is even less flattering. "I was born," she says, "in Heidelburg in 1652, and was a seven-months' child. I must necessarily be ugly, for I have no features, small eyes, a short, thick nose, and long, flat lips; and such a combination as this cannot produce a physiognomy. I have heavy, hanging cheeks, and a large face, and nevertheless I am short and thick; to sum up all, I am an ugly little object. If I had not a good heart, I should not be bearable anywhere. To ascertain if my eyes have any expression, it would be necessary to examine them with a microscope, for in any other manner it would be difficult to form a judgment. There could not probably be

found on earth hands more hideous than mine; the king has often remarked it to me, and made me laugh heartily; for not being able, with any conscience, to flatter myself that I possessed anything good-looking, I have made up my mind to be the first to laugh at my own ugliness. I have found the plan very successful, and frequently discover plenty to laugh at."

Even making every allowance for the exaggeration of this bitter pleasantry, it will readily be understood that the apparition of such a princess as Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, in the midst of the most beautiful and refined women in France, must have produced an extraordinary effect. Nor were her personal habits less opposed to those of her new associates than her appearance; unlike the great ladies of the court, who received their guests in their *ruelles*,[1] she sprang from her bed the moment she awoke, whatever might be the hour, and seldom partook of breakfast. Despising alike tea, chocolate, and coffee, she luxuriated in soups composed of milk, beer, or wine; devoured saur-craut; and restored her system, after any temporary indisposition, by a diet of ham and sausages. She was exceedingly partial to dogs and horses, and assumed male attire whenever she rode out; but, despite these strange and startling peculiarities, she was a woman of strong mind and ready wit, sarcastic, shrewd, and clever; and she had no sooner presented herself at the

[1] The space occupied by the bed, which was enclosed within a low balustrade. It was esteemed a high honour to be admitted to the *ruelle* of a royal personage; and Madame de Sévigné even speaks of being upon her knees in the *ruelle* of MADEMOISELLE, when she went to condole with her on the rupture of her marriage with Lauzun. In a more general way, the *ruelle* was the hotbed of coquetry, scandal, and intrigue.

French court than she became instantly aware of the impression she had produced. Even in her presence ridicule was not spared, and she required no prompting to feel convinced that in her absence she was still more roughly treated; but she supported the conviction with a philosophy which might well have disarmed her adversaries.

Resolved, nevertheless, to leave no doubt upon the minds of those about her of her perfect acquaintance with the fact, she seized an opportunity when she discovered that she was the victim of the malicious raillery of Madame de Fienne, and taking her by the hand, she led her apart, and said firmly; "Madam, you are very amiable, and extremely witty; and, moreover, you possess a style of conversation which is endured by the king and *Monsieur*, because they are accustomed to it; but I, who am only a recent arrival at the court, am less familiar with its spirit; and I forewarn you that I become incensed when I am made a subject of ridicule. For this reason I was anxious to give you a slight warning: if you spare me, we shall get on very well together; but if, on the contrary, you treat me as you do others, I shall say nothing to yourself, but I shall complain to your husband, and if he does not correct you, I shall dismiss him."

From that moment, Madame de Fienne, who had hitherto spared no one, never ventured to utter a witticism on the subject of the Duchess d'Orleans.

Meanwhile Lauzun was passing his time drearily enough in the sombre fortress of Pignerol, where he was confined in a grated chamber, and not permitted to hold intercourse with any one; but ere long he became so seriously indisposed, that it was considered necessary to

allow the visit of a confessor; who had, however, no sooner approached his penitent, than the latter seized him by the beard, in order to convince himself that he was not a fictitious monk, sent to discover and betray his secrets. The Capuchin, unprepared for such a reception, called loudly for assistance, but was soon appeased by the explanation given by the sick man; to whom he afforded his assistance, and who was shortly afterwards restored to health.

This was no sooner the case than Lauzun, like every other captive, began to entertain vague hopes of effecting his escape; and he accordingly commenced, cautiously but energetically, to remove the stones in a dark corner of his cell; but his labour availed him only in so much, that it brought him into communication with some of his fellow-prisoners, who had been similarly engaged; and enabled him to discover that his immediate neighbour was no other than the superintendent Fouquet, who had already been an inhabitant of the citadel for seven dreary years, without the slightest communication with any one beyond the walls. The recognition was, consequently, a joyous one for the comptroller; and the two prisoners laboured so successfully that they were soon enabled not only to converse, but even to visit each other in their respective cells.

Eager as Fouquet was, however, to learn all that had passed at court since his imprisonment, he soon ceased to yield perfect credence to the information afforded by his companion: nor could it well be otherwise; for Lauzun naturally commenced by a narrative of his own fortunes; and when Fouquet heard this young adventurer, who, when he remembered him, had been only too grateful for

a home under the roof of the Marshal de Grammont, assert that he had been a general of dragoons, captain of the royal guards, and in command of a portion of the army, he began to suspect that his mind was disordered; and as he proceeded to explain the unhappy accident by which he had failed to be appointed grand-master of the artillery, and his subsequent quarrel with the king, he became more and more convinced that he must be labouring under a delusion; but when, in the course of his tale, he arrived at his betrothal to MADEMOISELLE, and related all the circumstances by which the marriage had been prevented, Fouquet no longer hesitated to consider him as a confirmed lunatic; and from that time avoided his society, from fear for his personal safety.

When the court finally saw fit to mitigate the rigour of his captivity, and to permit him to receive the visits of his wife, and a few individuals of Pignerol, one of his first cares was to pity and explain the lamentable condition of the unhappy Marquis de Peguilain, whom he had left with a noble career before him, and who was then a lunatic in the fortress; nor was it without extreme difficulty that he could be induced to believe that Lauzun had deluded him in no single circumstance; but that the romantic history to which he had listened was true from first to last.[1]

While these things were passing at Pignerol, a new and successful candidate for the good graces of the king had appeared at court in the person of the young Duke de Longueville; who was, as we have stated elsewhere, born at the Town Hall of Paris during the Fronde; and

[1] Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.

who had, upon the death of his father in 1663, succeeded to his title and estates.

In addition to these advantages the young prince possessed a handsome person, and captivating manners, which soon rendered him popular, not only with the king himself, but with the whole court: and in the height of his success, when he was beginning to weary of amusement, his happiness attained its climax by an order which he received to follow the sovereign in the approaching campaign in Holland, for which the necessary preparations were nearly completed.

CHAPTER II.

ALARM OF THE DUTCH—THE ARMY OF LOUIS XIV.—THE SECRET TREATY—APPEAL OF THE STATES-GENERAL—HAUGHTY REPLY OF LOUIS XIV.—PRETEXT FOR WAR—THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD—THE PRINCE OF ORANGE—ADVANCE OF THE FRENCH ARMY—THE PASSAGE OF THE RHINE—IMPRUDENCE OF THE DUKE DE LONGUEVILLE—THE SKIRMISH—DEATH OF THE DUKE DE LONGUEVILLE—WOUND OF CONDÉ—DISPERSION OF THE DUTCH FORCES—WILL OF THE DUKE DE LONGUEVILLE—LEGITIMIZATION OF HIS NATURAL SON—A CONVENIENT PRECEDENT—HIGH-SPIRITED REPLY OF THE PRINCE OF ORANGE—DEATH OF TURENNE—GALLANTRY OF THE COUNT DE GUICHE—HIS DEATH—THIRD SON OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—ABANDONMENT OF THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE—HER PROJECTED RETIREMENT FROM THE COURT—OPPOSITION OF THE KING—THE CARMELITE CONVENT—BITTER MORTIFICATION—BOSSUET AND THE PENITENT—OFFER OF LOUIS XIV.—THE QUEEN AND LA VALLIÈRE—THE FATAL DAY—PARTING OF THE KING AND LA VALLIÈRE—HER RECEPTION BY THE COMMUNITY—A CONVENTUAL INTERIOR—DEATH OF THE DUKE DE VERMANDOIS—HUMILITY OF THE ENNOBLED NOVICE—HER DEATH—EUROPEAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE DUTCH INVASION—PROGRESS OF LITERATURE IN FRANCE—THE THREE DRAMATISTS—LOUIS XIV. AND BRITANNICUS—THE CHEVALIER DE ROHAN—THE CONSPIRACY—MADAME DE VILLARS—EXECUTION OF THE CONSPIRATORS—THE POISONERS.

THE Dutch had witnessed with alarm the manifestations which we have already described, and of which it was impossible to misunderstand the purpose. All the nobility had been convoked; and every castle had furnished a chief, followed by his vassals ready armed,

after the fashion of the feudal times. One hundred and eighteen thousand men, and a hundred pieces of ordnance, formed the strength of the invading army; which was, moreover, augmented by a crowd of volunteers, partisans, and carbineers; who already looking upon Holland as a rich and certain booty, joined themselves to the regular forces, in order to better their fortunes. The generals of Louis XIV. were Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg, and Vauban.

The lamentable death of *Madame* had delayed, but by no means altered the designs of the French and English sovereigns. The spoils of the republic which they were about to annihilate, had been already amicably shared in a secret treaty between the two courts; just as in 1635 Flanders had been shared with the Dutch themselves. The report of this intended invasion had already been noised throughout Europe; but Europe listened in silence, and remained passive. The Emperor of Germany was fully occupied with the seditions in Hungary; and Sweden laid to sleep by intricate negotiations; while Spain, always weak, tardy, and undecided, left a free path to the ambition of Louis XIV.

To complete the misfortune of Holland, the Dutch were divided into two violent factions. On one side were the rigid republicans, to whom every shadow of despotic authority was odious; and on the other a more moderate party, who were anxious to establish the young Prince of Orange in the possession of his ancestral rights. The Grand-Pensionary, John de With, and his brother Cornelius, were at the head of the opposition, but the party of the prince was beginning to predominate; and these domestic dissensions so occupied the public mind, that

its attention was dangerously diverted from external enemies.

As the peril became imminent, however, the States-General roused themselves sufficiently from their lethargy to address a letter to the French king, in which they inquired if the hostile demonstrations then on foot in his country were indeed directed against themselves, his old and faithful allies; in what they had offended him; and what reparation he required at their hands. But to this very pertinent appeal the haughty monarch vouchsafed no other answer than that "he should make such use of his troops as his dignity exacted, and was bound to give an account to no one." The only pretext alleged meanwhile by his ministers being, that the Gazetteer of Holland had been guilty of insolence towards Louis XIV; and that it was asserted Van Benning had struck a medal injurious to his renown.[1]

On his side, Charles II. advanced an equally puerile reason for his hostility, by complaining that the Dutch fleet had not lowered their flag before an English vessel; and that a certain painting had been executed in which Cornelius de With was represented with all the attributes of a conqueror, the back-ground of the picture being occupied by dismantled and captured ships. The English ministers, who delivered in a written statement of the "grievances" of their monarch, designated this an

[1] "There had been bestowed on Louis XIV. the device of the sun, with the motto '*Nec pluribus impar;*' and it was asserted that Van Benning, whose Christian name was Joshua, had caused himself to be represented also with a sun, accompanied by the words '*In conspectu meo stetit sol;*' but such a medal never, in reality, existed."—*Le Siècle de Louis XIV.*

abusive picture; and the States, who invariably translated all ministerial documents into French, having rendered the word abusive by *trompeur*, replied that they could not comprehend what was meant by the *deceitful picture* of which complaint was made; never for an instant suspecting that allusion was made to the portrait of one of their own citizens; and thus they were unable to imagine the real nature of this strange pretext for war.

While Louis XIV. and his minister expended the enormous sum of fifty millions (equal in the present day to a hundred millions) in the bare preparations for invading the petty States of the United Provinces, Charles II, if necessarily less profuse, was at least equally active; and augmented the English fleet, under the command of the Duke of York, which already consisted of a hundred ships of war, by thirty fifty-gun vessels.

The most remarkable feature of the campaign was, however, the newly-formed household of Louis XIV. It consisted of four companies of body-guards, each composed of three hundred noblemen, among whom were a number of unpaid cadets, subject, like the rest, to the regulations of the service; two hundred gendarmes of the guard; two hundred light horse; five hundred musketeers, all men of birth, selected for their youth and personal beauty; twelve companies of gendarmerie, subsequently augmented to sixteen. Even the "hundred Swiss"[1] accompanied the king; and his regiments of

[1] The hundred Swiss were a privileged company of infantry, armed with halberts. The sovereigns of France, from the year 1453, had in their service Swiss soldiers, who received high pay, and who formed in some sort their body-guard. Their costume was a blue Spanish coat, (afterwards changed to red,) laced with gold.

French and Swiss guards acted as sentries over the house or tent which he chanced at the time to occupy. These troops, who were nearly all covered with gold and silver embroidery, were at once the objects of terror and admiration to the Dutch, among whom every species of magnificence was unknown.

Moreover, Louis XIV. sure of success, carried also in his train the historian Pélisson, the faithful friend of Fouquet, who was entrusted with the record of the campaign.

Never was a greater contrast afforded both in the accessories and the actors than that exhibited between the adversaries in the forthcoming struggle. The Dutch collected with considerable difficulty an aggregate of twenty-five thousand men; ill-appointed, and worse disciplined. Their general-in-chief was the Prince of Orange, then only twenty-two years of age, who had been elected by the nation; and who, although destined at a later period to ascend the English throne, and to cast his shadow also over that of France, gave, at the moment of which we treat, no symptom of his after greatness.

Unlike his magnificent opponent, he was cold and grave; and the thirst of glory and ambition, of which his actions subsequently revealed the extent, had never been betrayed by his words. He saw himself trammelled not only in his actual resources, but also by the jealousy of the States, who limited the extent of his authority. His available funds were scanty, his experience nul, his

They were suppressed towards the close of the reign of Louis XVI. Re-established under Louis XVIII. in 1827, they took the name of the grenadier body guards of the king, but they were again disembodied in 1830.

natural tastes ascetic, and his temperament feeble; and at the very commencement of the campaign he found himself utterly unable to arrest the torrent which swept forward like an avalanche, and threatened to overwhelm his unhappy country. Four cities were simultaneously placed in a state of siege, and all four were taken. The Duke de Lorraine, who endeavoured to raise troops in order to unite his fortunes with those of the republic, had the mortification of seeing his principality seized by the French forces; and the whole of Holland was in danger of the same fate so soon as Louis should have passed the Rhine. The Prince of Orange had originally designed to defend the river; but he had no sooner completed his preparations than he became aware of the impracticability of the attempt, and fell back upon Holland in order to collect all his strength upon the opposite bank.

He was, however, deceived by the rapidity of his enemy's movements, for the French king reached the shores of the Rhine while he believed him to be still occupied with the besieged cities; and measures were already mooted in the hostile camp for passing the stream; while all the military posts upon its border, as well as upon the Issel, surrendered without a struggle. Several of the governors of the frontier fortresses forwarded to him the keys of their citadels; while many of the officers deserted from the towns in which they were garrisoned, even before the enemy had made any hostile demonstrations, and thus increased the general alarm.

Nothing could appear more propitious for the invaders, who at once decided on passing the river, in order to cut off all communication between the Hague and Amsterdam, and to make an end at once of the army of the

Prince of Orange. Their first idea was to effect the passage by means of a bridge of boats; but a long drought having greatly diminished the volume of water, and even formed an apparent ford across a branch of the stream, near an old tower known as the tower of Tol-Huys, which was garrisoned only by a score of men, it was resolved that the ford should be attempted, in order to discover if it were practicable; and Condé immediately sought a volunteer among the superior officers for this dangerous duty. The Count de Guiche, who, since the death of *Madame*, had only sought for opportunities of self-sacrifice, offered himself on the instant; and having passed and repassed the river under the fire of the enemy, returned with the announcement that with the exception of about twenty paces in the centre of the current, the horses would have footing from one bank to the other. It was consequently decided that on the morrow the army should avail themselves of this mode of transit.

The French camp was distant about six leagues from the river; but by commencing their march at eleven o'clock at night, the whole body were enabled to reach the Rhine by three in the morning; and the Count de Guiche, acting as their guide, was the first to leave the bank, closely followed by the cuirassiers of Revel, and the corps of volunteers. The king then moved forward, declaring that he would lead his household across; but Condé, who from a severe attack of gout could not venture the passage on horseback, detained him by the remark that should His Majesty persist in swimming to the opposite shore, it would be impossible for him to follow in a boat.

Unfortunately for his fame, Louis XIV. yielded to this suggestion, and suffered the troops to pass without him; contenting himself by complaining of *his greatness which confined him to the bank.*

This pusillanimity, (for those who were aware of the pertinacity of the monarch on all occasions where his personal inclination was concerned, could view his present conduct in no other light,) was the less excusable, as the landing was comparatively easy, being opposed only by four or five hundred mounted soldiers, and two weak regiments of infantry, without ordnance; while the French artillery protected the advance. A few of the Dutch cavalry, indeed, entered the stream, but they were soon compelled to retreat, and having again reached the shore, they fled precipitately before their enemies; while the infantry, throwing down their arms, demanded quarter, and attempted no opposition. Fifteen thousand men thus passed the river, only the Count de Nogent, and a few of the more impetuous who disregarded the limits of the ford, being swept down by the current, and drowned; after which Condé made a safe passage in his boat.

It is probable that no other lives would have been lost, had not the young Duke de Longueville, who was panting for an opportunity to distinguish himself under the eyes of the monarch, become incensed at the non-resistance of the enemy; and, as he spurred his horse up the steep bank upon whose summit the Dutch troops were standing unarmed, fallen upon their lines, shouting indignantly; "No, no! no quarter for this rabble;" firing his pistol as he uttered the words, and killing one of their officers.

The effect of his rashness was electrical; the Dutch

sprang instantly to their arms, and by their first volley brought down a score of the royal army, and among the rest the duke himself, who received a ball in his heart, and fell dead from his horse; while, at the same instant, a captain of the Dutch cavalry who had not fled like the rest, rushed towards the Prince de Condé; who, having landed from the boat was about to mount his horse, and presented a pistol at his breast. Condé had only time to turn aside the barrel with his arm, when it was fired, and his wrist was shattered by the ball; upon which the French soldiery, irritated by the wound of The Prince, and the death of the duke, vigorously attacked the Dutch regiments, who made a rapid and disorderly retreat.

A short time afterwards the body of the handsome, gallant, but imprudent Duke de Longueville was conveyed to the opposite bank of the river, flung across the back of the gallant steed which had borne him so bravely to his death; but he did not escape unmutilated, for some miscreant, attracted by the splendour of a diamond ring which he wore on his left hand, had profited by the confusion of the moment to cut off his finger.

The king passed the Rhine upon a bridge of boats at the head of the infantry.

We shall pursue the campaign no further; but proceed at once to mention the advantage taken by the king, of a circumstance consequent on the death of the unhappy young duke. His untimely fate excited universal commiseration in the capital; and a great sensation was created by a bequest contained in his will, of five hundred thousand crowns to a natural son, whose mother was a married woman of high rank.

Louis had no sooner ascertained the circumstance than

he took immediate steps to soothe the wounded honour of the husband; and being desirous to establish a precedent of which he might subsequently avail himself, he sent an order to the parliament of Paris to legitimize the son of the Duke de Longueville without mentioning in the act the name of the mother; a proceeding which had never hitherto been attempted, which was illegal, but which nevertheless did not experience the slightest opposition.

Louis XIV. soon wearied of a campaign which he had commenced from pride rather than principle; a campaign in which Condé and Turenne sustained their already brilliant reputation, and the Prince of Orange acquired the fame due to his military genius. And he afforded a palpable proof that such was the case by conceiving the idea of a marriage between Mademoiselle de Blois, the daughter of la Vallière, and the prince his opponent, at a period when his own prosperity and success would have appeared to render such an alliance the greatest honour and advantage which could accrue to the gallant young soldier. But Louis deceived himself. William of Nassau, who was the grandson of Charles I. of England, haughtily replied that the Princes of Orange were accustomed to contract marriages with the legitimate daughters of kings, but not with their natural children; a reply which wounded Louis XIV. so deeply, that he never either forgot or forgave the insult; and even occasionally acted against his better judgment in order to harass and injure the prince.[1]

The two great catastrophes produced by this struggle were the burning of the Palatinate, and the death of Turenne, who was cut in two by a cannon ball; while

[1] Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.

the Count de Guiche, who, throughout the whole period, exposed his life wherever there was danger, was not fated to meet so honourable a death; in vain did he throw himself into the thickest of the fight, and volunteer for every duty which was considered as almost desperate; although his wounds were numerous, no one of them proved mortal; and this gallant and gifted young man ultimately died at Creutznach, in his thirty-fifth year, of a broken heart.

At this period Madame de Montespan had lost her eldest son, the Count de Vexin, and had given birth to a third, upon whom the king bestowed the same name, and to whom he gave the royal abbey of St. Denis; while la Vallière, who had endeavoured to cheat herself into a belief that Louis had recalled her from her retreat from affection and regard, saw his attentions diminish day by day, until she became once more abandoned, and almost forgotten, save by her more happy rival, whose malice reached her even in her solitude. Her heart was broken by this new disappointment, for now she could no longer deceive herself; but for one whole dreary year she supported all the bitterness of her fate in silence; cold and impassive, not even the impertinence to which she was subjected even from those who had once vowed to her an eternal friendship, could rouse her into resentment. Her one great sorrow had absorbed all minor suffering; but at length she found that she could no longer sustain the struggle.

Madame de Montespan, who alone had accompanied the king to Holland, was all-powerful at court, and spared neither sarcasm nor insult which could increase the bitterness of her position; and once more she re-

solved to retire from the unequal contest, and leave the stage free to the triumphs of her rival.

The Marquise de Rémy, delighted by a resolution so consonant with her own wishes, at once advised her to withdraw to her duchy of Vaujours, where she offered to bear her company, and to assist in the education of her children; but the spirit of the forsaken favourite was broken; and she no longer felt that she possessed sufficient energy to enter upon so responsible a life. Still, grateful for the anxiety of her mother, she consented to submit this project to the king, and to abide by his decision; although her thoughts yet recurred to the night which she had passed at Chaillot, and she sighed for the more perfect seclusion of a conventual life.

When the proposition of her retirement to Vaujours was submitted to the selfish monarch, it was negatived upon the instant, on the pretext that she was too young and too handsome to be left so entirely to her own guidance; nor would he listen to the idea of her retiring to Chaillot, alleging that Mademoiselle de la Motte having taken the vows in that community, whose favour had never equalled that of Madame de la Vallière, there ought necessarily to be an equal difference in the place of their retreat.

A short time subsequently, having accompanied the queen, whose continued friendship was her only consolation, to the Carmelite convent, where Her Majesty was accustomed to retire upon all solemn festivals, and where two of her personal friends had professed, the impression produced upon the mind of the penitent was so powerful that she consulted her confessor upon the subject; who strongly urged her not to resist a feeling which had evidently been

divinely inspired. Her heart went with him; she was weary of her burthen, and longed to be at rest; and when, a few weeks afterwards, she ascertained that the queen, on speaking of the convent in the king's presence, had declared that she was deeply moved by the extraordinary devotion of Madame de la Vallière, who had accompanied her on her last visit; and that his answer had been, that if she was resolved to withdraw from the court, the Carmelites was the only retreat suitable to her; she embraced every opportunity of visiting the community, who received her with kindness, although utterly unaware of her identity.

Her first mortification under this holy roof was a bitter one. On one occasion she accompanied a friend who accidentally called her by her name, and the effect which it produced struck her to the heart. Every eye was averted, and every lip closed; and the courtly sinner in her purple and fine linen, felt herself to be an object of avoidance to the pure and pious women among whom she stood.

Nevertheless, la Vallière, remorseful and spirit-worn as she was, could not look upon the cloister without a shudder. She was still young, still beautiful, still loving. Her life had been one of luxury; and even her sorrows had been pillowed upon velvet. She was, moreover, a devoted mother; and her affection for her children was like a chain of iron binding her to the world. Her *human nature* rebelled, and she hated herself for her weakness; but it was stronger than her will. The Marquise de Rémy, indignant at the objection of the king, still urged her to retire to Vaujours; her friends counselled her to remain at court; even Louis himself

expressed his dissatisfaction at her resolution; and it is probable that she might have consented to prolong her martyrdom, had not Bossuet been beside her to lay bare the sin and danger of the position to which she clung. The victim of a passion which even neglect and contumely could not extinguish, she was subjected at every instant to the commission of some new error; surrounded by all the adventitious advantages of rank and wealth, the body was pampered even while the soul suffered; exposed to the malice of a powerful enemy, her worst passions were excited against others, when she should only have been weeping over her own sins: in short, in her present position, the world was in her, and about her; she clung to possibilities instead of reading the stern lessons of the past; and forgot the promises of heaven in the deceits of earth.

As she listened to his exhortation, the heart-broken penitent resolved at once to escape from the yoke which had pressed upon her so heavily—the yoke of sin, whose ways had been bitterness; but Bossuet would not consent to permit a merely impulsive sacrifice, and condemned her to another year of trial. The period was not quite accomplished when the strength of the unhappy woman suddenly failed; and a long and dangerous illness supervened, during which her life was for many days in danger.

Even the supreme egotism of Louis XIV. gave way when he learnt her peril, and he visited what was at the moment considered to be her death-bed, accompanied, not by Madame de Montespan, but by Madame de Maintenon, who exhibited the most sincere sympathy for the sufferer. But such a demonstration of interest came too late. La Vallière had found herself at the very gates of

the grave, and felt the enormity of her transgression. Some human shrinkings there were still; some clingings to the ties and temptations of a world by which she had once been worshipped; but they were weakened alike by bodily suffering, and by mental remorse; and although she still struggled on for a few weeks, her resolution had become decided.

In vain did the king represent to her the extreme austerity of the order which she had selected; and bid her make choice of any of the richest abbeys of France, declaring that she should become the abbess of whichever she might prefer; la Vallière declined to avail herself of this last mark of consideration, alleging that she who had not been able to govern herself, was ill-calculated to undertake the control of others; and this painful interview once over, she hastened to take leave of her children, her worst and greatest trial, and to send them away from her; for she feared to expose herself to their presence and caresses, lest her heart should fail her at the last moment. This done, all that remained to be accomplished was comparatively easy; for she regulated her worldly affairs like one in a dream, without a tear or a regret.

On the day which preceded that of her retreat, she went at an early hour to the apartment of the queen, where, throwing herself upon her knees, she implored her pardon for all the sorrow she had caused her; when Maria Theresa, moved to tears, raised her up and embraced her, desiring that she would, like herself, forget the past errors for which she was about so nobly to atone.

The fatal day at length dawned; and by a singular coincidence Louis XIV. was to depart immediately after

the grand mass to join the army in Flanders, at the same moment that the forsaken favourite was to set out for the living grave, to which she had herself consigned her youth. Throughout the whole of the service she remained in deep and earnest prayer, and never once raised her eyes; but at its conclusion, as she advanced to the tribune to take leave of the king, her countenance was as pale as death; and she staggered, and must have fallen, had she not been supported by her mother.

This weakness was, however, not contagious. The eye of Louis was dry, and his voice firm, as he bade her farewell, and expressed a hope that she would be happy in her cloister; after which he stood composedly to see her enter her carriage with a tottering step, and drive away. Not a sign of emotion escaped him; and the equipage had no sooner disappeared, than he entered into conversation with those about his person, as calmly as though he had never loved the unhappy woman whose life was to be thenceforward one of trial and privation.

On arriving at the grate where the superior of the Carmelites was awaiting her at the head of her community, the repentant sinner cast herself upon her knees; declaring that she had hitherto made so ill an use of her will, that she came to resign it up into the hands of the abbess for ever; and entreated that, even during the year of her noviciate, she might be permitted to wear the dress of the order.

Nothing could be more exemplary than her resignation: nothing more unaffected than her piety. The hard and narrow pallet, the vigorous fasting, and the hours of unbroken silence exacted by the order, awoke no murmur upon her lips. She complained only of the

flat and unwieldy sandals by which her feet were wounded, and her thoughts occupied, when she would fain have detached them wholly from earth. The visits of the court were irksome to her; she longed to be more thoroughly severed from her memories of the past; and in the extent of her humility, had requested permission from the abbess to profess as a lay-sister, which was, however, refused; her strength not being considered equal to the life of labour which such a vow would have entailed.

All the trials of the sister Louisa of Mercy, however, —for such was the name of her adoption—were not destined to end at the dark portal which she was never again to cross.

The death of her brother, the Marquis de la Vallière, was a heavy blow for which she was wholly unprepared; and seven years subsequently, that of her son the Count de Vermandois, grand-admiral of France, was announced to her by Bossuet. For a moment she stood motionless, as if turned suddenly to stone, with her hands tightly clasped together, and her pale face bent down upon her bosom; but in the next instant she rallied, and raising her large blue eyes to heaven, she said, in a resigned and humble accent: "It would ill become me to weep over the death of a son, whose birth I have not yet ceased to mourn."

For six and thirty dreary years did the hitherto delicate and pampered duchess exist amid the privations, hardships, and austerity of a convent, increasing whenever she was permitted to do so, every humiliation and every fatigue; until at length the death for which she sighed finally released her from all further suffering, in her sixty-sixth

year, in the arms of the daughter whom she had so fondly loved; bequeathing to her affection a memory which had been purified by piety and prayer.

Something so gentle and so touching is attached to the name of la Vallière, despite her error; and this second phase of her life awakens so deep and sincere an interest, that we have permitted ourselves to dwell on it at considerable length, feeling that we shall be pardoned for our prolixity.

Return we now, however, to the current of our narrative.

The invasion of Holland, which had originated in vanity, and which Louis XIV. had fondly believed would be readily accomplished, changed the whole aspect of affairs in Europe. When he crossed the Rhine all the neighbouring nations were his allies; but the uncompromising display of power which he had deemed it expedient to make on that occasion had convinced them of their individual danger, should they persist in a neutrality which must tend at once to increase his strength, and to weaken their own means of resistance. Spain was the first to declare itself; after which Germany, which had already assumed a menacing attitude, took up arms, and marched upon the invading army; and ultimately England joined the league.

The war had thus become European; and France, instead of finding herself in a position to annihilate a petty republic, was suddenly opposed to three powerful nations; while Sweden alone had remained faithful to its engagements. It therefore became necessary for Louis to accomplish a peace; but as he saw that a general treaty would only involve endless negotiations

from the conflicting interests of the coalesced powers, he instructed his plenipotentiaries to treat with each cabinet separately. Holland, exhausted by the previous struggle, and mistrustful of William of Orange, who was about to form an alliance with the eldest daughter of the Duke of York, was the first to accept a peace; Spain followed; and ultimately Germany; but Louis was compelled to make many concessions in order to effect his purpose. The treaties were, however, finally signed: that with the emperor being designated the peace of Nimègue.

The war had in no degree interrupted the progress of art and literature in the capital; the drama flourished; Racine, Corneille, and Molière continued their glorious rivalry: the first was firmly maintaining the supremacy which his youth had for a time tended to cloud; the second, despite his seventy-five years, still retained a portion of the force of his earlier age; while Molière was on the very pinnacle of his greatness. The author of *Britannicus* had, moreover, blent wisdom with his wit; and taught even Louis XIV. a lesson by which he did not fail to profit. On the first representation of this drama, which took place in the presence of the king, he was startled by the following lines, which he at once appropriated:

> "His great ambition and his highest aim
> To guide his car triumphal through the ring;
> To strive for gauds unworthy of his hands,
> And be himself a spectacle to Rome."

From the moment in which these words fell upon his ear, Louis XIV. determined never again to dance in a ballet; and he maintained his resolution.[1]

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

An actual tragedy meanwhile took place in Paris, which produced a powerful effect all over the kingdom. The Chevalier de Rohan,[1] exasperated by his exile from the court, full of ambition, and eager for notoriety, had entered into a conspiracy with Spain, which was intended to overthrow the monarchy, and to render France a republic.

Overwhelmed with debt, sacrificing everything to the gratification of the moment, and without any settled principle, he was open to every temptation which promised to reinstate his shattered fortunes. The Prince and Princess de Soubise,[2] hopeless of reclaiming him by remonstrance or example, had utterly estranged themselves from his interest, and never mentioned his name; and thus he became a traitor to his king without even the apology of a mistaken patriotism.

The citizens of Messina, exasperated against Don Diego de Soria their governor, had cast off the Spanish yoke, and offered their allegiance to the crown of France, which had received and welcomed its new ally; a circumstance so disloyal in the eyes of the King of Spain, that he resolved at the first opportunity to avenge it. The

[1] Louis, Prince de Rohan, better known as *The Chevalier*, was born in 1635, and was the son of Louis de Rohan, Duke de Montbazon, Prince de Guemenée. Appointed grand-master of the hunt in 1656, on the death of his father, and subsequently colonel of the guards, he rendered himself conspicuous at the court of Louis XIV, by his adventurous intrigues, and his ruinous expenditure. Exiled by Louis XIV, who suspected him of encouraging the vicious tastes of his brother, Philip d'Orleans, he entered into a conspiracy which had for its object to place the Spaniards in possession of several of the fortresses in Normandy.

[2] Heads of the Rohan family.

disposition of Rohan was well known, nor were his embarrassments matter of less notoriety; and the Marchioness de Villars was commissioned by the Count de Monterey to offer to the chevalier alike a guarantee for his personal safety, and a promise of abundant remuneration, should he consent to head the conspiracy. Madame de Villars was a desperate gambler, and a woman devoid alike of principle and modesty, who as an earnest of the goodwill of Spain towards its agents, received twenty thousand crowns on undertaking the commission, with the promise of a million should the conspiracy prove a successful one; and she exerted her influence so skilfully that she not only induced M. de Rohan to accept the offer which she was authorized to make, but also to be guided in every respect by her counsels.

She it was who conducted the cyphered correspondence between the chevalier and the court of Spain, and was the soul of the intrigue; but as it was above all essential to secure an intelligent and trustworthy courier, she introduced to de Rohan a ci-devant schoolmaster who was at that period residing at Picpus; and accompanied by this individual the chevalier privately met the Count de Monterey in Flanders, where it was agreed between them that on a certain day, at the hour when the tide would serve, Admiral Tromp with his fleet should arrive in the harbour of Honfleur or Quillebeuf in Normandy: and that, at a given signal, la Truaumont,[1] the Chevalier de Préaux, and de Rohan himself, should deliver up both the port and the town to the King of Spain.

The plot was, however, discovered before it had

[1] Son of a councillor in the Chamber of Accounts.

ripened; and the conspirators were arrested, conveyed to Paris, and put upon their trial as traitors at the Tournelle.[1] The previous popularity, the ancient name, and above all, the fearful memories called up by this impeachment, of the sufferings of the nobility under Richelieu, created universal consternation; and every exertion was made to induce the clemency of the king, but he remained inflexible. The marchioness and the two chevaliers lost their heads, and the schoolmaster was hanged; while la Truaumont, who was in the very pride of his youth and strength, avoided the scaffold by resisting his jailers so desperately as to lose his life in the struggle.[2]

New, and even more alarming circumstances were however taking place at this period, which soon withdrew the attention of the court from the fate of M. de Rohan and his colleagues, and turned their thoughts upon their own safety.

To the tragical death of the Princess Henrietta, had succeeded many others, all sudden, mysterious, and inexplicable; in many cases they had occurred at the precise moment in which individual vengeance would seem to have called them down, and yet no trace of foul play could be detected. The dead lay calm, and apparently untouched by human hands; but it was, nevertheless, impossible to doubt the agency of poison; and the public were the more confirmed in their suspicion by the fact that this fearful crime had latterly made con-

[1] The Tournelle was a parliamentary tribunal, composed of a given number of judges, taken in rotation from the Upper Chamber and the Chambers of Inquiry, for the purpose of trying criminal causes.

[2] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

siderable progress in the kingdom. Even during the period of civil war, so treacherous a weapon had been unknown; and by a singular fatality its use had been withheld until a time when France was revelling in pleasure and renown; even as it had previously reserved its mysterious horrors for the palmy days of the Roman republic.

CHAPTER III.

DISCOVERY OF THE CRIMINALS—THE MARCHIONESS DE BRINVILLIERS—LA VOISIN AND LA VIGOREAUX—FIENDISH ASSOCIATION—PUBLIC EXCITEMENT—ARREST OF SUSPECTED PERSONS—WIT OF THE DUCHESS DE BOUILLON—FLIGHT OF MADAME DE SOISSONS—HER ARRIVAL IN SPAIN—DISTRUST OF THE SPANISH MONARCH—HER FAVOUR WITH THE QUEEN—THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA LOUISA D'ORLEANS, AND CHARLES II. OF SPAIN—HER REPUGNANCE TO THE ALLIANCE—INTIMACY OF MADAME DE SOISSONS AND THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR—DEATH OF THE QUEEN BY POISON—EVASION OF MADAME DE SOISSONS—HER DEATH AT BRUSSELS—HER UTTER DESTITUTION—TRIAL OF THE DUKE DE LUXEMBOURG—HIS NOBLE DEFENCE, AND PARTIAL ACQUITTAL—EXECUTION OF LA VIGOREAUX—DIABOLICAL END OF LA VOISIN—FAMILY OF LOUIS XIV.—THE DAUPHIN—HIS BETROTHAL—COURT APPOINTMENT OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—INVETERACY OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—INDIGNATION OF THE KING—THE OLD FAVOURITE AND THE NEW ONE—THEIR INTERVIEW—HOUSEHOLD OF THE DAUPHINESS—ARRIVAL OF THE PRINCESS—THE MILITARY CONFESSOR—PORTRAIT OF THE DAUPHINESS BY MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ—THE ROYAL MARRIAGE—CHILDREN OF THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE—MADEMOISELLE DE BLOIS—SHE MARRIES THE PRINCE DE CONTI—THE MARRIAGE—THE COUNT DE VERMANDOIS—HIS PROFLIGACY—HIS IMPRISONMENT—CHILDREN OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—THE COUNT DE VEXIN—THE DUKE DU MAINE—MADEMOISELLE DE NANTES—MORTIFICATIONS OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—HER SCANDALOUS REVENGE—HER PROTÉGÉ—MADEMOISELLE DE FONTANGES—HER PORTRAIT—INFATUATION OF THE KING—GAIETY OF THE COURT—MADEMOISELLE DE FONTANGES CREATED A DUCHESS—HER LEVITY AND EXACTIONS—CONTEMPT OF THE QUEEN—FRIVOLOUS OSTENTATION OF THE NEW MISTRESS—VINDICTIVENESS OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—PÈRE LA CHAISE—A ROYAL DILEMMA—THE MEDIATRIX—INSOLENCE OF MADAME DE FONTANGES—HER EGOTISM—A KING'S REFUGE—ACCOUCHEMENT OF MADAME DE FONTANGES—HER SICKNESS—HER RETREAT—HER DEATH—INDECENT JOY OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—ACCUSATION AGAINST HER—THE DEAD FORGOTTEN.

THE public mind might have remained upon the rack for an indefinite period on the subject of these frightful visitations, which spared neither sex nor rank, had not

the confessional enabled the Grand Penitentiary of Paris to ascertain the use of poison in several different instances; and the increase of the crime became so rapid and so alarming, that he considered it his duty to apprise the authorities of the fact. Immediate investigations were set on foot in consequence, by which it was elicited that two Italians, named Exili and Destinelli, after having laboured for a considerable time in pursuit of the philosopher's stone in connexion with a German apothecary, and sacrificed in this useless speculation the little money they possessed, had endeavoured to recruit their finances by the fabrication of subtle and fatal poisons, which they vended secretly; and of which the most frightful feature existed in the circumstance that they left no outward trace of their agency.

These men were at once committed to the Bastille, where Destinelli shortly afterwards died; while Exili remained a prisoner, although he was never convicted of the crime of which he was accused, and employed himself, even in his cell, in imparting to some of his former associates the fatal secret by which he had convulsed the capital. The celebrated Marchioness de Brinvilliers was one of the first to profit by this fearful knowledge to the destruction of half her family; but her history is matter of such notoriety, that we shall simply glance at the fact, while it will be expedient to be more explicit as regards some individuals of inferior rank; who, not content with employing their secret for the purposes of personal vengeance, made a traffic of their iniquitous knowledge to an extent which infested the whole capital.

La Voisin, a popular fortune-teller, who was consulted by all the high nobility of Paris, was the first to venture upon this diabolical trade; she saw at a glance how

much her reputation must profit by so sure an opportunity of realizing her own predictions; and, ere long, she not only foretold to expectant heirs the speedy removal of their wealthy kindred, but she even undertook to ensure to them the exact period when they should enter upon their inheritance; and as her pledge was almost universally redeemed, she found the number of her clients increase so rapidly, that she was compelled to take into her confidence another fortune-teller named la Vigoreaux, and two priests, Lesage and d'Avaux.

This fiendish association was no sooner formed than Paris was inundated with murder. No precaution sufficed for safety. Death lurked in every object of daily use—a glove, a perfume, a glass of water, or a missal, each in its turn did the work of the conspirators. Friends shrank from receiving the gifts of friends; fathers looked with suspicion upon the hospitality of their sons; and sons in their turn forebore to grasp the hand of their fathers; the young beauty shuddered at the cosmetics upon her toilette, and the grave matron at the relics upon her rosary; the soldier could not handle his weapon without suspicion; and magistrates bent with dread over their parchments.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that the morals of these wretched women were of the most depraved description; and that as they had no scruples of conscience to contend against, the evil continued to increase from day to day. They sold different liquids, essences, pomatums, and perfumed toys; and under cover of this commerce they attracted to their residence persons of every rank, from the prince to the artizan, and from the duchess to the courtezan.

It was impossible that such a state of things as this could be suffered to exist: even the king trembled in his gilded chambers; and it was accordingly decided that a *Chambre Ardente*[1] should be immediately established, with full power to enter upon the trial of all suspected persons. The parliament complained of this exceptional assembly, as an encroachment upon its privileges; but in reply it was informed that, as in all probability many of the highest personages of the realm might prove to be more or less implicated, it was necessary that the tribunal should hold its sittings with as much secrecy as those of Venice and Madrid; and it was accordingly established at the Arsenal near the Bastille.[2]

La Voisin, la Vigoreaux, and the two priests were first arrested, the extreme popularity of their establishment having at length excited the suspicion of the police; who soon discovered that it was the centre of intrigue and seduction, and that their commerce, apparently so trivial and innoxious, was, in fact, a barter of death for gold. Along with them were also arrested a number of the very dregs of the people, who having been convicted of the same unholy traffic, were summarily put to death; while, although the examination of the original criminals did not transpire, it soon became apparent that they had also implicated many persons of high rank.

Monsieur, it was asserted, had twice visited the wizards, and had repaid their revelations by sums nearly

[1] The *Chambre Ardente* was a meeting established in each parliament by Francis II. for the extirpation of heresy, whose sentences were beyond appeal, and in most cases immediately put in force. The tribunal of poison, under Louis XIV, assumed the same name from the fact of its awarding punishment by fire.

[2] Siècle de Louis XIV.

amounting to five thousand pistoles; but he had simply sought to obtain information as to the fidelity of his first wife. The queen had also, in her turn, on one occasion consulted la Voisin, although merely from curiosity to see a person who occupied so much of the public attention; and upon the witch proposing to supply her with a philtre which would compel the affection of the king, fearing to endanger the health of His Majesty she had refused to receive it; and had never seen her again. The Countess de Soissons had been less scrupulous: it was known that she had visited the house of la Voisin more than thirty times, and had also admitted her to her own apartments. Her principal aim, it was said, had, however, been to possess herself of the immense inheritance of her uncle the cardinal, to the exclusion of his other relatives, and to regain her influence over the monarch; for which purpose she had delivered to the sorceress many articles of apparel which he had worn, and even, as it was asserted, a lock of his hair, and some drops of his blood in a small phial.

Fouquet, it was also ascertained, had previously to his arrest been in frequent communication with la Voisin, upon whom he ultimately settled an annuity which was, even at that period, continued by his family.

The Count de Bussy Rabutin, the Duke de Lauzun, the Duchess de Bouillon, the Duke de Luxembourg, and the Cardinal de Bouillon, had each in their turn been guilty of the same imprudence; but, like *Monsieur*, for the most puerile purposes; and only three persons of the court were cited before the judges—the Duchess de Bouillon, the Countess de Soissons, and the Marshal de Luxembourg. The accusation brought against the

duchess was a mere absurdity, quite beyond the jurisdiction of any law court, but she nevertheless obeyed the summons without opposition; and, upon being asked by M. de la Reynie, the lieutenant of police who presided, if she had ever seen the devil, whose apparition la Voisin was accused of calling up, she answered calmly; "No, Sir; I had not previously seen him, but I do so at this moment; he is very ugly, and disguised as a councillor of state."

The examination was not pursued.

Madame de Soissons was not even subjected to this ordeal; for the king, from respect to the memory of her uncle, directed her to be informed that if she felt herself guilty of the charges which were about to be brought against her, he advised her to leave the country without delay: to which she replied that, although innocent, she had such a horror of a court of justice that she preferred banishment to subjecting herself to its power; and she accordingly retired to Brussels, after having been compelled to dispose of her charge as comptroller of the queen's household, which was purchased by Madame de Montespan; while at the same period the king appointed Madame de Maintenon mistress of the wardrobe to the dauphiness Mary Anne Christina Victoria of Bavaria, whose hand he had already demanded for his son, from her father, the Elector Ferdinand.

M. de Soissons had died in a sudden and mysterious manner while serving with the army in Germany in 1673; and suspicion had been excited that in his case poison had also been employed, while it was murmured that the countess was not guiltless of the crime; but as her favour at court appeared at that time

to be firmly re-established, no one ventured to accuse her openly. She remained but a short time in Brussels, and then proceeded to Spain, to the great astonishment of her friends, who, aware that foreign princes were not acknowledged in that kingdom, were at a loss to imagine her motive; feeling that to a woman of her haughty disposition, who had been pre-eminently pertinacious on the subject of her rank, it must be a sensible mortification to find herself treated as a mere private individual.

Maria Louisa d'Orleans, the daughter of the unfortunate Princess Henrietta, who had in 1679 reluctantly given her hand to Charles II, was at that period Queen of Spain. Originally intended by Louis XIV. to become the wife of the dauphin, she had been reared in that expectation, and had exerted herself to attain all the accomplishments necessary to adorn so exalted a station. Young, beautiful, and graceful as her mother, whom she strikingly resembled, she had already secured the admiration of the whole court, and the affection of the king; when, remembering that this alliance would necessarily greatly tend to increase the influence of his brother, not only over the dauphin himself but also over the ministers, Louis determined otherwise; and at once acceded to the demand of her hand made by the Spanish monarch.

This intelligence was a heavy blow to the princess; and when she was compelled by etiquette to appear at Versailles to make her acknowledgments to the king her uncle, her agitation was so great that she could scarcely articulate, while large tears chased each other down her pale cheeks. It was nevertheless certain that it was her country and the court which she regretted, rather than the dauphin himself, who was ill calculated to gain the affections of a refined and sensitive woman. As he

approached in his turn to congratulate her, and a slight flush had already risen to her brow, the blood was forced back to her heart by the first words he uttered.

"My dear cousin;" said the witless prince; "I am quite anxious for you to arrive in Spain, that you may send me some *toura*. I am so fond of it." The king bit his lip; and taking the hand of the trembling princess, said how much he grieved to see her tears; and that he begged her to remember that he had made her Queen of Spain, and could have done no more for his own daughter.

"That is true, Sire;" sobbed out the victim of his policy; "but you might have done more for your niece!"

Maria Louisa was married in state in the great chapel at St. Germain, where the Cardinal de Bouillon, as grand-almoner of France, performed the service; after which, with painful and undisguised reluctance she departed for Madrid. Her youth and beauty at once secured the affections of her husband, who, although bigoted and constitutionally melancholy, soon loved her with a sincere and absorbing passion which rendered him suspicious of all who approached her; indeed her empire over the heart of Charles became ultimately so great that the cabinet of Vienna were alarmed lest she should, from her affection for her native country, exert her influence to induce her husband to declare in favour of France against themselves.

The Count de Mansfeld was German ambassador at Madrid at the period when the Countess de Soissons arrived at that court, and an intimacy was immediately established between them; while the unfortunate young queen, who clung to everything which could remind her of her home, expressed the greatest

desire to see and converse with her. In vain did the king, who had heard the history of her past career, and who had already been warned that the queen had numerous and dangerous enemies, endeavour to combat this inclination; the entreaties of Maria Louisa were so earnest that he at length consented to the reception of the countess; but still only on condition that she should be privately introduced into the palace by a back staircase, and in his own presence; but as the society of the courtly exile became more and more agreeable to the queen, and that he could not on all occasions be at her side, he at length conceded that she should continue to see the countess, provided that she would promise not to partake of any food from her hands which he had not previously tasted in his own person; a pledge which was given more carelessly than it was demanded.

On one occasion, overcome by the heat of the weather, the queen, who chanced to be alone with her new friend, remarked how much she regretted the scarcity of milk at Madrid, and how greatly she should enjoy a long draught at such a moment, when she was almost fainting from the exhaustion produced by the sultriness of the atmosphere; upon which the Countess de Soissons assured her that she knew where to procure some which was excellent, and that with Her Majesty's permission she would in a few minutes have it iced, and bring it to her with her own hands. The queen eagerly consented; and Madame de Soissons immediately leaving the palace, drove, as it was asserted, to the residence of the Count de Mansfeld. She was not long absent; and Maria Louisa receiving with a smile of acknowledgment the coveted beverage, swallowed it at a draught.

In half an hour she was dangerously indisposed.

Amid the confusion consequent on this event the countess contrived to leave the palace and return home, where her baggage being already prepared, she forthwith escaped from the capital. The king, apprised of all the circumstances, sent in pursuit of her without loss of time, but unavailingly. Her arrangements had been so long and so skilfully made that it was found impossible to overtake her. The queen died in a few hours, in the same agony as her mother had previously done, and was mourned by the whole kingdom; while the countess made the best of her way to Germany, where for a short time she lived in retirement; although the Count de Mansfeld was recalled, and appointed to one of the first posts at the court of Vienna. Ultimately, however, when the Spanish monarch contracted a new alliance with a German princess, Madame de Soissons obtained permission to return to Flanders; and in the year 1708 died at Brussels, poor, despised, and forsaken, not only by all who had formerly been her friends, but even by her son the Prince Eugène; and so great were her necessities during the latter period of her life, that on one occasion she was driven to apply for assistance to the Duke de Mazarin, who sent her two thousand francs for her support.

The Duke de Luxembourg,[1] who when first accused instantly delivered himself up, had been sent to the Bastille by his enemy Louvois, to await his trial; where, not content with depriving him of his liberty, he caused him to be confined in a cell only six feet in length; and

[1] Francis Henry de Montmorency Bouteville, duke, peer, and marshal of France.

it was from this narrow dungeon that he passed to the tribunal. The first interrogatory addressed to him was still more unfortunate than that which had been put to the Duchess de Bouillon; for he was asked if he had not entered into a compact with the devil, in order to effect the marriage of his son with the daughter of the Marquis de Louvois.

"Sir;" replied the marshal, with a gesture of supreme disdain; "when Matthew de Montmorency married the widow of Louis le Gros, he did not address himself to the devil, but to the States-General; who declared that in order to secure to the infant king the support of the Montmorencies during his minority, the marriage was a matter of necessity."[1]

His acquittal followed on the instant; but he nevertheless remained a prisoner for many months.

La Vigoreaux was hanged, after having been subjected to the most rigorous torture, which failed to extort a confession of her crimes, or a revelation of her secret; and died with a courage worthy of a better cause. The death of la Voisin was still more frightful. After having undergone the question, both ordinary and extraordinary, by which every bone in her body was broken, and all trace of her humanity almost destroyed, she continued to utter oaths and blasphemies at which even the soldiers by whom she was guarded were appalled; and as the flames reached her, poured forth her last breath in a hideous oath.

At this period a death took place which must not be left unnoticed. It was that of the Cardinal de Retz;

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

who, during his sojourn at Rome, had contested the popedom with Innocent XI, and even obtained eight votes; but who had returned to Paris three years previously, only to die amid the scenes in which he had once acted so prominent a part; and to take his final leave of a world by which for the last twenty years he had been almost forgotten.

Turn we now to the immediate family of Louis XIV. The unfortunate queen, after becoming the mother of six children, had at this period only one surviving son, the Dauphin, whose governor was the Duke de Montausier, and his preceptor, Bossuet. His character was one of those singular anomalies which almost defy analysis. Incapable of either affection or hostility, he was the slave of every impulse. The example of his guardians had inspired him with a few amiable qualities, but his natural vices defied eradication, and were only subdued by discipline, but never corrected. His constitutional tendencies were all evil; his greatest pleasure consisted in annoying those about him; but occasionally, as the precepts of his instructors flashed upon his memory, he did not hesitate to compensate the person he had offended. Those who were the most conversant with his humour could never guess the temper of his mind; he laughed the loudest, and affected the greatest amiability when he was the most exasperated; and scowled defiance when he was perfectly unruffled. He could not be esteemed intellectual, although he occasionally exhibited a quickness of perception which astonished those about him. His only talent, if it deserve so to be designated, was a keen sense of the ridiculous, not only as regarded others, but even himself. Nothing escaped him that could be

tortured into sarcasm, although no one could have guessed, from his abstracted and careless demeanour, that he was conscious of anything that was taking place in his presence.

His greatest terror existed in the idea he must one day become the sovereign of France; not because such a circumstance would necessarily involve the death of his father, but simply that he shrank from the exertion which the responsibility must entail upon him. His indolence was so extreme that he constantly neglected the most important duties; and his favourite amusement was lying stretched upon a sofa, tapping the points of his shoes with a cane. Never, to the very day of his death, had even his most intimate associates heard him express an opinion upon any subject relating either to art, literature, or politics. Nevertheless, when he did exert himself to speak, and that he was in the humour to do so, his expressions were well chosen, and even elegant; while, on other occasions, he talked like an idiot. One day he uttered sentiments which gave earnest of the most tolerant and liberal ideas, and the next he declaimed like a tyrant who had no sympathies with his fellow-men. He made no favourites, but was not the less jealous of the attachment of every one by whom he was approached. His greatest ambition was to conceal his real feelings, and nothing annoyed him so much as to discover that they had been understood. Humble and timid before his father, he never ventured to assert his privileges as dauphin of France; the only person towards whom he ever betrayed a dislike being Madame de Maintenon; while even this aversion was accompanied by the most perfect submission to her will.[1]

[1] Louis XIV, sa Cour, et le Regent.

In person he was somewhat above the middle height; stout, without being heavy; with a lofty carriage; and without any thing repulsive in his manner. His face would have been pleasing, had not the Prince de Conti, when wrestling with him in their boyhood, given him a fall which broke his nose. His hair was a fine shade of auburn, his face full and healthy, but totally without expression, his limbs finely formed, and his feet small and slender.

At the close of the year 1679, Louis XIV. demanded for him, as we have elsewhere stated, the hand of the Princess Mary Anne of Bavaria; and as the monarch had always asserted that personal beauty was essential to the wife of every prince likely to be called to a throne, great curiosity was excited by the announcement of the negotiation. It was fated, however, to signal disappointment by the declaration of Louis, that his selection of the Bavarian princess had been entirely dictated by policy; that she was not handsome, but that he trusted MONSEIGNEUR would be able to live happily with her. The miniature which had been forwarded to France, although evidently flattered, presented a plain, and even a repelling countenance, with deeply sunk eyes, alike cold and stern in their expression; but the dauphin was altogether careless upon the subject; and, after having inquired if his intended bride were free from any deformity, and receiving an assurance to that effect, he asked no further questions.

The appointment of Madame de Maintenon to the distinguished post of mistress of the robes to the dauphiness, greatly excited the wrath of Madame de Montespan, who witnessed, with ill-concealed uneasiness, the rapid progress which "the widow Scarron" was making

in the favour of the king; and she even ventured, as Louis recapitulated to her the members of the new household, to indulge in an impatient gesture which did not escape his notice. He immediately demanded to whom, among those he had named, she had taken exception; remarking that they were all persons for whom he cherished a sincere esteem, and that he could only pity her, if she did not entertain the same feeling towards each and all of them. Carried away by her jealousy, she nevertheless replied with considerable asperity, that she could not approve the selection of Madame de Maintenon, as it was impossible for the courts, either of France or Bavaria, to have forgotten the ridiculous name of the poet Scarron.

The time was, however, past, when Louis could be turned from his purpose by a sarcasm from her lips; and he consequently observed with considerable coldness, that it behoved every one to forget what he had himself forgotten; and that he was astonished she should take pleasure in overlooking circumstances which his gratitude had fixed unalterably in his own memory. Undaunted even by this reproof, the haughty marquise retorted by declaring that she was aware, and ready to acknowledge, that Madame de Maintenon had nursed her children with care and fidelity; but that as she had received a marquisate as her recompense, and moreover a superb hôtel at Versailles, she had no right either to complain, or to expect further benefits.

More and more irritated by the tone of dictation assumed by his mistress, the king remarked severely that the estate of Maintenon barely compensated her care of the sickly childhood of the two Counts de Vexin; and

that Madame de Montespan would do well to remember, that she had also educated four others, for which she still remained unrecompensed.

At this rejoinder, the patience of his interlocutor fairly gave way. "Give her then," she exclaimed angrily; "another estate and a sum of money, for it is by money that services like hers should be requited; but why should you invest her with an important office, and retain her at court? She dotes, as she declares, upon her old castle of Maintenon; do not deprive her of such an enjoyment. If you make her mistress of the robes, you will thwart her inclinations."

"In that case;" said the king with an ambiguous smile, as he rose to leave the apartment; "she will accept the appointment *to oblige me.*"

Baffled, but not discouraged, Madame de Montespan next endeavoured to persuade the stately gouvernante to decline the honour which had been proposed to her, and by which the independence for which she had so long sighed would once more be utterly sacrificed; but the wily favourite was destined to be as unsuccessful in the one attempt as in the other; in vain did she represent the incompatibility of sincere religion with the etiquette, the ceremonials, and the restraint of a court; Madame de Maintenon meekly replied that true piety depended upon the heart alone, and was independent of external circumstances; that her first duty was obedience to the king her master; and that should it be indeed the pleasure of His Majesty to elevate her to so responsible an office as that named by the marquise, she did not consider that she possessed any right to combat his will.

In short, it was evident that the offer had been already

made and accepted; and Madame de Montespan, fearful of still further irritating the monarch, was compelled to conceal her annoyance as she best could, and to terminate the visit without having accomplished her object.[1]

This was the period of struggle between the two former friends; but Madame de Montespan, although she resolved not to yield, could no longer conceal from herself that she was rapidly losing ground in the affections of her royal admirer; for not only had she to contend against the sound judgment and high reputation of Madame de Maintenon herself, but also against a preference less worthy than that which this lady had secured by the propriety of her conduct, and the value of her services. The haughty favourite had already reached her thirty-ninth year, and although still handsome and fascinating, she had lost the charm of youth; and it was evident that Louis still clung to her rather as the mother of his children than from any more tender feeling; while the court was radiant with grace and beauty, and all eyes, as he was well aware, were turned towards himself.

One of the most earnest candidates for his favour was the Princess de Rohan-Soubise, who was indeed so certain of her power that she even ventured in her turn to assert her claim in defiance of that of Madame de Maintenon, and to apply to the king for the appointment which he had resolved to bestow upon the latter; but her letter remained unanswered; and in the height of her indignation she made so indecent a display of her claims upon the monarch, that she received an order to leave the court.

Louis XIV. had now attained his forty-second year,

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

and found himself even less disposed than he had previously been to remain subject to the caprices of a tyrannical and exacting woman. More than once he made an effort to separate himself entirely from Madame de Montespan, and to induce her to retire to one of her estates; but the force of habit was still too strong upon him; and her reproaches and remonstrances only tended to lead him into new errors, even while the violence of her temper added to his actual estrangement.

The births of her last two children had, greatly to her annoyance, been as sedulously concealed from the knowledge of the public as those of the Count de Vexin and the Duke du Maine; and the king had to support all the effects of her irritation. Their quarrels became frequent; and in the height of passion the marchioness spared neither sarcasm nor insult. On these occasions Louis found a refuge and a consolation in the friendship of Madame de Maintenon, who, even while she soothed his wounded vanity, never failed to remind him that these mortifications had been the result of his own excesses; and thus he became gradually accustomed to hear his conduct canvassed and condemned without resentment. The esteem which he had learnt to feel for his new monitor gave additional weight to her respectful but firm admonitions; while the playfulness of her conversation at other moments rendered her society a constant resource.

The contrast between the former friends was consequently striking; and its effect dangerously inimical to Madame de Montespan, who became conscious that each day increased the influence of her adversary, while her own star paled in the same proportion. The king began to observe with less attention the courtesies of society

when he compelled himself to visit her; he exaggerated his politeness, and diminished his respect. As he always remained a given time in her apartments, the last ten minutes were invariably spent in watching the progress of the time-piece upon her mantel; and he took occasion, at no very rare intervals, to dilate upon her defects, and to criticise her temper.[1]

Thus were things situated when the appointments to the household of the dauphiness having been publicly announced, the most magnificent preparations were put in progress for her reception; and among these, none were more splendid than the costumes of Madame de Maintenon, which were covered with jewels and embroidery in gold and silver. There can be no doubt that this profusion was the will of the king rather than that of the *Dame d'Atours* herself, who had retained until that period the primitive attire in which she first appeared at court; a pertinacity which was, however, doubtlessly to be attributed as much to a refined coquetry as to a natural preference for so lugubrious an attire; for Madame de Maintenon, although in her forty-fifth year, had lost no charm save that of youth; which had been replaced by a stately grace, and a dignified self-possession, that rendered it almost impossible to regret the lighter and less finished attractions of buoyancy and display. Her hands and arms were singularly beautiful; her eyes had lost nothing of their fire; her voice was harmoniously modulated; and there was in the whole of her demeanour an unstudied ease, which was as far removed from presumption as from servility.

Such was Madame de Maintenon at the period of the

[1] Louis XIV, sa Cour, et le Regent.

dauphin's marriage; and even her jealous rival was betrayed into the declaration that she "pitied the young foreigner, who could not fail to be eclipsed in every way by her mistress of the robes."

At the commencement of the year 1680 Madame de Maintenon and M. Bossuet proceeded to Schelestadt to receive the future dauphiness, whose advent in France was rendered more than usually embarrassing by a circumstance which had been utterly overlooked. She had scarcely welcomed her new courtiers, and taken an hour's repose, when it became necessary for her to confess herself, before she could proceed to the ceremony of marriage by proxy; and as she was not accompanied by a domestic chaplain, and that she would not use any language but her own, the difficulty appeared for a time to be insurmountable.

Madame de Maintenon was in despair; and appealed to Bossuet, to learn whether he, who had educated the dauphin, and had written a *Discourse on Universal History*, did not understand sufficient German to relieve the princess from her dilemma; but the Bishop of Meaux excused himself from the trial, alleging that although he was familiar with Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew, he was utterly ignorant of German. A strict inquiry was then made throughout the neighbourhood, and at length it was ascertained that a priest speaking the required language had been found. The punctilious mistress of the robes raised her eyes in thankfulness, and desired that he should be immediately introduced; but she almost started from her chair with horror as he entered the apartment. He was gaily attired in a coloured vest lined with silk, a flowing wig, and wore

spurs upon his boots. The indignation of Madame de Maintenon was extreme, and she reproached him with considerable vehemence; but Bossuet, who was fortunately a greater casuist than herself, reminded her that in cases of urgency form must be disregarded; and having compelled the amphibious personage to remove his spurs, he thrust him into the confessional, and drew the curtain close; after which the Bavarian princess was apprised of his arrival; and ignorant of the masquerade by which her *Dame d'Atours* had just been so deeply moved, confessed the sins of her past life to the species of military-priest who had obeyed the summons of the bishop.[1]

The king and MONSEIGNEUR advanced as far as Vitry-le-Français to receive the dauphiness in their turn; whence they conducted her to Châlons, where the queen was awaiting her arrival. She was not, as the monarch had already declared, a beautiful woman; but she possessed a style of face which made a more favourable impression after the first interview. "She had something," as Madame de Sévigné informs us, "about her nose and forehead which was too long, and which at first produced an unpleasant effect; but she was so graceful, her hands and arms so beautiful, so fine a figure, so admirable a carriage, such handsome teeth, such magnificent hair, and so much amiability of manner, that she was courteous without being insipid, familiar without losing her dignity, and had so charming a deportment that she might be pardoned for not pleasing at first sight;" while her ready wit and perfect self-possession may be estimated by her reply to the king, when during

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

their conversation he remarked to her that she had not mentioned the fact that her sister, the Princess of Tuscany, was extremely beautiful.' "How can I remember, Sire, that my sister monopolized all the beauty of the family, when I, on my part, have monopolized all its happiness."

The Cardinal de Bouillon performed the marriage ceremony in the cathedral of Châlons, and the festivals and rejoicings were continued for eight days. In order to reconcile Madame de Montespan to the new honours of her rival, Louis XIV, who was well acquainted with her judgment in all matters connected with the toilette, and especially with her knowledge of jewels, entrusted her with the preparation of the nuptial casket; which was so magnificent, that it excited the jealousy of the queen, who complained loudly that the same outlay had not been made in her case, although her family was far superior to that of the dauphiness.

Agreeably surprised by the appearance and deportment of the Bavarian princess, the king devoted himself almost entirely during the first few months to render the court of France agreeable to her; but although she received these attentions with complacency and gratitude, and appeared totally unembarrassed by the etiquette and magnificence of her new condition, it soon became evident that the perpetual whirl in which she was involved was repugnant to her tastes; and whenever she could escape for a few hours, she invariably spent them alone in her chamber, where she was surrounded by musical instruments, and books in the several languages with which she was familiar;[1] and she did this with the less

[1] Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.

reluctance, as it was soon whispered to her that all these unwonted attentions on the part of the monarch were due to his desire of thus procuring an available method of enjoying the society of her mistress of the robes.

This intimation, in which she felt her own dignity to be involved, rendered her still less scrupulous than she might otherwise have been; and she accordingly withdrew herself gradually from the dissipations of the court, and passed the principal portion of her time in retirement. In vain did the king endeavour to render her immediate circle more cheerful, by increasing the number of her maids of honour; nothing could induce her to forego her studious and solitary habits; and the rather that Madame de Montespan had imbued her with a perfect dislike and suspicion of her rival, whose remonstrances were consequently treated with indifference. Ultimately, hopeless of inducing any change, either by indulgence or expostulation, Louis abandoned her to her primitive tastes; carefully observing the rules of the most punctilious politeness, but avoiding all interference with her domestic arrangements.

There can exist no doubt, however, that the resolute retirement of the dauphiness might be attributed in no slight degree to the mortification which she experienced on discovering that her husband, although heir to the throne, was a mere cipher, without influence or authority; shrinking, whenever it was possible, from all contact with the monarch, utterly devoid of moral courage, and wasting his life in mindless and undignified frivolities. Her pride was hurt, and her affections wounded; she felt her position to be a false one; and had too much self-respect to accept the mere externals of

her rank without their relative privileges; and thus her sole endeavour was to make the present suffice to her happiness, without any recurrence to the hopes of the past, or any anticipations on the events of the future.

Next to the dauphin followed the two legitimized children of Madame de la Vallière—Mademoiselle de Blois and the Count de Vermandois. Mademoiselle de Blois was one of the most beautiful and the most interesting women imaginable. Her figure was tall, slight, and graceful; she was highly accomplished; and the watchful care of her mother had secured to her not only an admirable education, but also a sense of self-respect and strict propriety which enhanced all her other attractions. The expression of her countenance was serious, like that of the king, to whom she bore a striking likeness: she had the same large brown eyes, and Austrian lip; the same elegantly modelled hand, and slender foot; and even the same quality of voice. Several foreign princes had asked her hand; but on every occasion Louis XIV. had declined the proposition, declaring that the presence of his daughter was as necessary to him as light and life, and that he could not consent to her leaving France.[1] In 1680 the king accordingly married Mademoiselle de Blois to the Prince de Conti, the nephew of the great Condé; and we cannot do better than transcribe the brief but lively description given by Madame de Sévigné of some circumstances incident on the event.

"I as yet know nothing," she writes to her daughter, Madame de Grignan; "of what passed at the wedding; I am ignorant whether it were by sunlight or by moonlight

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

that it took place, but I will tell you the greatest and the most extraordinary piece of news which you can learn; and that is, that The Prince was shaved yesterday; actually shaved: this is not an illusion, not a thing said at random, it is a truth; all the court were witness to it; and Madame de Langeron, seizing her opportunity when he had his paws across like a lion, made him put on a vest with diamond button-holes; while a valet-de-chambre, also presuming upon his patience, curled his hair, powdered him, and at length compelled him to be the handsomest man at court, with a head which threw all the wigs into the shade. That was the prodigy of the marriage. The costume of the Prince de Conti was inestimable; it was an embroidery in large diamonds, which defined all the pattern of a black velvet plush raised upon a ground of straw colour. The duke, the duchess, and Mademoiselle de Bourbon had each three dresses trimmed with different jewels for the three days. But I was forgetting the principal point: the sword of The Prince was encrusted with diamonds.

La famosa spada
All' cui valore ogni vittoria è certa.

The lining of the mantle of the Prince de Conti was of black satin studded with brilliants like minever. The princess was romantically beautiful, superbly dressed, and happy."

The motive which induced the house of Condé to desire this alliance, was, according to Madame de Caylus, sufficiently expressed in the playful congratulation of the Count de Grammont to the bridegroom.

"Sir," he said with a smile, "I am delighted at your marriage; take my advice; humour your father-in-law, do not cavil with him, nor take offence at small matters. Live on good terms with your new family: and take my word for it that you will find the connexion a very good one."

The king caused the same ceremonies to be observed at the marriage of Mademoiselle de Blois, as though he had been giving a daughter of the queen to the king of Spain. Her dowry was the usual one with crowned heads; that is to say, it amounted to the sum of five hundred thousand gold crowns; which were, moreover, paid, and not a mere ornament to the contract.[1]

The Count de Vermandois, to whose death we have already alluded, abandoned after the retreat of his mother to a governor who was inadequate to the duties of his office, became haughty, presumptuous, and dissipated, to so fearful a degree that the king banished him from his presence; his repentance had, however, partially restored him to favour, when sober history affirms that a sudden illness carried him off while he was serving with the army at the siege of Courtrai, in 1683. Other rumours were, nevertheless, afloat at the time; and it was asserted that, having on one occasion had a dispute with the dauphin, which terminated in his striking that prince, the council assembled on the subject unanimously condemned him to death; when Louis XIV, whose paternal affection could not countenance so extreme a measure, commuted the sentence to imprisonment for life; and that, in consequence, an opportunity was taken at

[1] Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.

Courtrai of spreading the report that he was suffering under a contagious disease, which enabled those entrusted with his arrest to forbid all ingress to his tent; and after having announced his death, to convey him privately to the island of St. Marguerite; whence he was afterwards transferred to the Bastille, where he remained until 1703, under the name of the Iron Mask.[1]

Madame de Montespan had become the mother of eight children. The elder, who was the first Count de Vexin, died in his eleventh year, from over application to his studies. Madame de Maintenon had never loved him, and he amply repaid her dislike, although he never ventured until he was on his death-bed to express his aversion; but when conscious that he was beyond her power, he reproached her bitterly with her harshness, and her ingratitude to his mother. Two hours afterwards he was a corpse.

The Duke du Maine, the especial favourite not only of the king, but what was far more fortunate for him, of Madame de Maintenon also, was, even at the early age of thirteen, an accomplished courtier. He was slightly lame from a fall during his infancy, a circumstance which was to him an endless source of mortification. Nothing could exceed the inherent subtlety of M. du Maine; but his intellect, no less than the graces of his person, enabled him to win the confidence of all around him. Affecting the most artless, frank, and natural demeanour, he possessed to an extreme degree the art of insinuating himself into the favour of those from whom he considered himself likely to obtain the greatest ser-

[1] Louis XIV, sa Cour, et le Regent.

vices; and while assuming an appearance of piety and indifference to worldly advantages, he nursed the most ambitious hopes, and the most extravagant designs, which his well-acted timidity enabled him effectually to conceal. Innately malignant, envious, and false, he was profoundly deceitful, haughty, and unforgiving; while he possessed a ready wit and a fascination of manner which disarmed caution, and captivated the affections of all whom he was anxious to conciliate. Of a cowardice which exceeded belief, he never hesitated to sacrifice, when he could do so without danger of detection, everything and every body in order to ward off from himself the effects of his own pusillanimity. His one affection was for Madame de Maintenon, to whom he was devoted; but he had little regard for his mother, looking upon himself as wronged by the stain that rested on his birth; and which the legal legitimization bestowed upon her children by the king, could never, as he was conscious, effectually efface.

Mademoiselle de Nantes, the next in succession, although not precisely a pretty woman, was full of grace and buoyancy; and inherited much of her mother's wit and sarcasm, although she never condescended to wield those formidable weapons with the same coarseness. Slightly lame, like her brother, she nevertheless danced admirably, and managed each of her movements with so much skill, that in her case it almost appeared to be a new charm. Winning in her manners, always ready to sympathize in the amusements of her circle, and to banish all constraint wherever she appeared; totally regardless of the interests of others, a fact which was well known; but so fascinating that even those who had the greatest

cause for mistrust and dislike were compelled constantly to bear their wrongs in mind lest they should be betrayed into placing themselves again in her power; she was at once a false friend and a dangerous enemy. Lively and prepossessing; gifted with a presence of mind which no circumstance could weaken; fond of frivolous amusements; proud, and implacable in her resentments; cruel in her reprisals, and regardless of the feelings of those for whom she professed the greatest regard; idolized by the king, and worshipped by the court, Mademoiselle de Nantes was alike feared and courted.

Of the remaining children of Madame de Montespan little need be said at this period. Mademoiselle de Tours died in 1681; and the Count de Toulouse, and the second Mademoiselle de Blois were both still in their infancy.

Their mother continued, despite the perpetual mortifications to which she was subjected by the increasing favour of her rival, to make herself conspicuous at court by the splendour of her appearance and the exuberance of a wit more brilliant than refined; but she was compelled to acknowledge to herself that both the one and the other had ceased to produce any effect upon the affections of the king; while she was moreover becoming every day more conscious that Madame de Maintenon, although five years her senior, had, from her different style of life, retained a purity of complexion and an elasticity of form which were rapidly failing in herself. The crisis was critical; but the marchioness was a person of expedients; and after having maturely reflected upon her position, and the slight probability which there existed that she should ever again be enabled to monopolize in

her own person the affections of the monarch, she resolved, mortifying as was the expedient, to weaken his growing regard for Madame de Maintenon by contrasting her matronly attractions with those of some young beauty whose charms the susceptible monarch should be unable to withstand. The personage of her drama was soon found; and this point accomplished, she lost no time in expatiating in the presence of the king and Madame de Maintenon upon the beauty of her young *protégée*. The curiosity of Louis was piqued, and he inquired the name and family of this unknown marvel.

"Her name is Fontanges;" said the marchioness; "and she comes from Provence, Sire, like other beautiful objects, such as silk, gold, and silver. Her parents are anxious to place her among the maids of honour of the queen; and if loveliness be a claim to the office, I will be her pledge that in that respect she is unrivalled."

Madame de Maintenon listened with calm and unmoved politeness, but without the slightest demonstration of either interest or annoyance; while the king remarked with some bitterness that the young person in question must indeed be something extraordinary, since even Madame de Montespan could praise her with so much vivacity; and they should no doubt be ere long enabled to form their own judgment of her taste.

The wily marchioness had chosen her time admirably. The king was becoming weary of the familiar faces by which he was surrounded, and annoyed by the disappointment to which he had been subjected by the dauphiness. Incapable of self-amusement, and not yet sufficiently imbued with the sober tastes with which Madame de Maintenon was endeavouring to inspire him,

he found his time hang heavily on his hands, and was glad of any opportunity to escape from himself. The words of Madame de Montespan, therefore, were not forgotten; and two days subsequently the destined victim accompanied her protectress to court, where her extraordinary beauty even surpassed the expectations of the monarch. It was, however, a beauty merely physical, and without one ray of intellect. Her features were as regular as those of a statue; her complexion had all the glow of her eighteen summers; her figure was at once full and flexible; and her only defect was the colour of her hair, which was of too warm an auburn.

Mary Angelica d'Escorailles de Roussille, who in a month or two after her appearance at court was created Duchess de Fontanges, was so beautiful in her infancy, that it is gravely asserted as a fact, that her depraved and shameless family destined her from her very cradle to the career of unblushing profligacy, which death alone rendered less disgraceful in its duration than they had sought to make it. Her education had consequently all tended to that one point, and she was utterly devoid alike of principle and modesty. Until her eighteenth year no opportunity had occurred for bringing her under the notice of the king; when, as we have already stated, the unlooked-for agency of Madame de Montespan at once accomplished the desired object.

The modest charms of la Vallière had captured the affections of the monarch when his passion was still the timid and self-abnegating principle of youth; the haughty beauty of Madame de Montespan had flattered the foible of his riper years, when his taste for magnificence and display had become more powerful than the

mere indulgence of personal attachment. But he had now attained his forty-second year, a period at which the sentiment of the lover was absorbed in the selfishness of the voluptuary; and this was the only point of view in which the peculiar beauty of Mademoiselle de Fontanges was calculated to attract. Frivolous, fantastical, and vain, she was incapable of deep or earnest affection; but none understood better than herself the value of a glance or a gesture.

The king was instantly struck by her extraordinary loveliness, nor did he restrain his admiration even in the presence of the queen. Seizing his opportunity of approaching Madame de Montespan, who lost no time in presenting her young friend to His Majesty, he honoured her with a most gracious welcome, and conversed with her for several minutes; during which time, although she had not uttered one word which was worthy to be remembered, she had smiled so sweetly, her large and languishing blue eyes had been so eloquent, the golden veil cast by her redundant hair over her brow and shoulders had so marvellously enhanced their dazzling fairness and their faultless outline, that the triumph of the marchioness was complete.

During the last six or seven years, the king, as if feeling that his age no longer authorized the frivolities in which at an earlier period he indulged so lavishly, had modified his dress; the Spanish and chivalric costume so well suited to his lofty demeanour had been gradually abandoned; the floating plumes no longer waved above his forehead; the scarf which he formerly wore diagonally across his breast was laid aside; and the gold and silver embroidery had disappeared from his boots.

Suddenly, however, all these luxuries were resumed. The richest materials were employed upon his dress; the feathers once more decorated his beaver; and the most costly jewels blazed upon his person.

Nor was this all: for the monotony which had been for some time gradually enveloping the court, was swept away like a morning mist before the sunrise of Mademoiselle de Fontanges. All the amusements of the royal circle in its most palmy days were once more in full action. Allegorical representations, concerts on the water, ballets danced to the melodies of Lully, and comedies sparkling with the humour of Molière, succeeded each other with dazzling rapidity. The saloons of the new favourite were hung with tapestry representing the victories of her royal adorer; money and jewels rained upon her footsteps, which she squandered as recklessly as they were bestowed; and Madame de Montespan, although bewildered by the result of her own intrigue, bore all with patience, until the petted beauty insisted upon having her charms enhanced by the blazon of a duchess, a concession which was made within the week.

For twelve long years the marchioness had been reclaiming the same honour, pleading at one time the example of la Vallière, and at another the respect due to her children, declared princes of the blood; but although the king had humoured her by affecting an assent, and even taking sundry steps towards such an object, which he was well aware would be thwarted by the marquis, he had never seriously entertained an intention of gratifying her wish. Whatever were his motives, it is certain that his will must have sufficed, and that it was never exerted.

The mortification of Madame de Montespan was accordingly severe; but she resolved to confine it to her own bosom, and not to increase the triumph of the new duchess by the spectacle of her annoyance; or to suffer it to be supposed that she could condescend to feel any jealousy of the new plaything with which she had herself provided the monarch.

Mademoiselle de Fontanges was no sooner authorized to place a ducal coronet above the lozenge of her shield, and to drape it with a peer's mantle, than her presumption exceeded all bounds. On one occasion she passed before the queen, not only without a curtsey, but even without affecting to see her. The brow of the Infanta flushed for an instant, but she silenced the murmurs of those about her by the remark, that it was evident the young lady was losing her senses, or had never possessed them; and, meanwhile, Louis XIV, with whom the strict observances of etiquette had previously been as a principle of his existence, looked upon all the heartless levity of the unhappy girl without making one effort to restrain it; and, save the mere routine of public business, everything was neglected, in order that he might conduce to her amusement.

The splendid equipage of the *parvenue* duchess, with its eight white horses, was constantly to be seen in the *cours*, or the principal streets of the city; with the fair face of its beautiful owner, inundated by the bright profusion of her golden hair and her floating feathers, radiant with pride and happiness at the window, watching with delight the effect produced by her splendour.

Still, for a time, Madame de Montespan indulged a hope that the king would weary of the exacting inanity

of his new idol; but it was in vain that she watched for any symptom of a change; Louis was thralled; and after wasting her sarcasms for a time, both upon the infatuated monarch and his childish mistress, she at length poured them forth, not only unsparingly, but even indecently, upon the Père la Chaise, his confessor; for whom, while he had tolerated her own excesses, she had affected both veneration and attachment.

Père la Chaise was a nephew of the famous Père Cotton, who had been confessor to Henry IV; and like him was a Jesuit. He had originally been rector of Grenoble and Lyons, and subsequently provincial[1] of his province. He was of noble birth, and his family was tolerably ancient, and well connected; while his father would have been wealthy had he not been called upon to provide for twelve children. One of his brothers, who was deeply learned in the lore of dogs, horses, and field sports, was, for a considerable time, the equerry of the Archbishop of Lyons, the brother and uncle of the Marshals de Villeroi; and afterwards Captain of the Gate, a post in which he was succeeded by his son.

The two brothers were residing at Lyons, the one as provincial, and the other as equerry, when Père la Chaise was summoned to Paris in 1675, to undertake the charge of the king's conscience, as the successor of Père Ferriez. He was, according to the testimony of St. Simon, a man of confined intellect, but of excellent disposition; up-

[1] "Provincial" signified the superior of any religious order throughout a province, to whom the heads of the different monasteries within his jurisdiction were subject. The authority of the provincial was differently modified by the particular clauses contained in the rules and statutes of each individual order.

right, honest, well-judging, and gentle; and a determined enemy to all violent measures; alike honourable, just, and humane; and always affable, modest, and respectful to his superiors, as well as grateful for the services which he received from others.

With these qualities, which were, moreover, considerably counterbalanced as regarded the duties of his vocation by a want of firmness and moral courage, the peace-loving confessor had won distinguished favour in the eyes of Madame de Montespan, while he tolerated her own intimacy with the monarch; but she no sooner perceived that he was equally pliable in the case of Mademoiselle de Fontanges than she gave free vent to her malice in a variety of witticisms too gross for repetition; and so outraged the new-made duchess by indulging in them in her presence, that a disgraceful quarrel ensued between the two rivals, and Louis found himself compelled to entreat the intervention of Madame de Maintenon, who had remained perfectly passive throughout the whole intrigue.

To accomplish this end, the latter did not venture to address herself to the marchioness, for she felt the utter futility of any attempt at conciliation in that quarter; but trusting to the youth of Mademoiselle de Fontanges, and her comparatively short career of crime, she endeavoured to make her sensible of the indecency of compromising the monarch by undignified and unwomanly brawls, in which his name was introduced in a manner unsuited alike to his exalted station, and to the respect which was due to his feelings. She could, however, make no impression upon the childish and petted favourite; who affected the utmost

contempt for the discarded mistress, and overwhelmed her with ridicule; and who, after having vented her passion in the most puerile invectives, nevertheless saw fit to consider herself insulted, and to appeal to the king for justice in so demonstrative a manner, that Madame de Maintenon resolved, despite the ill success of her first attempt, to make one more effort to restore harmony. She had already seen enough of the virulence and egotism of Mademoiselle de Fontanges to comprehend that she must forbear all allusion to the marchioness; and accordingly she took higher ground, and endeavoured to set before her in its true light the enormity of the life which she was leading. More and more incensed, the vain and heartless beauty received her counsels with bitter derision and passionate insult; and attributed every annoyance to which she was, as she declared, perpetually subjected, to the jealous envy of those with whose ambitious views she had interfered; more than hinting that Madame de Maintenon herself was among the number. She was however answered only by a placid smile; and instructed to remember that those who sought to share her triumphs and her splendour, must be content at the same time to partake her sin, which was a price too heavy even for the smiles of a monarch; a fact which she appeared herself to have forgotten.

In vain did the flushed and furious beauty plead the example of others higher born and more noble than herself; the calm and unmoved monitress instantly availed herself of this hollow argument to bid her, in her turn, set an example which the noblest, and the best born, might be proud to follow.

"And how can I do this?" was the sullen inquiry.

"By renouncing the society of the king;" firmly replied her visitor. "Either you love him, or you love him not. If you love him, you should make an effort to save both his honour and your own. If you do not love him, it will cost you no effort to withdraw from the court; while in either case you will act wisely and nobly."

"Would not any one believe who heard you," exclaimed Mademoiselle de Fontanges passionately; "that it was as easy to leave a king as to throw off a glove?" and this was the only rejoinder that she vouchsafed. It is consequently needless to do more than remark that the mission of Madame de Maintenon signally failed; for the expression which had escaped the lips of the young duchess sufficed to convince her that all further interference would be useless. It was the monarch whom the weak beauty loved in Louis de Bourbon, not the man. The monarch—whom her vanity translated into gauds and glitter, luxury and ostentation, brocades and jewels. But as we have before remarked, Louis was thralled; and the reign of Mademoiselle de Fontanges was an endless succession of caprices, exactions, demands, and pretensions,—some so exorbitant, and others so puerile, that the unfortunate sovereign had continually cause to repent the weakness which had placed him in the power of a child.[1]

"You must imagine her;" writes Madame de Sévigné, full of regretful memories of la Vallière; "precisely the

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon, par M. de la Beaumelle. Laurence Angleviel de la Beaumelle was born in the diocese of Alais in the year 1727, and died in 1773. A learned scholar and an accomplished critic, he is nevertheless now principally known by his *Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon*, a work entitled *Mes Pensées*, and his diatribes against Voltaire; who, on his side, overwhelmed him with personalities and insult.

reverse of the little violet which hid itself among the herbage, and which blushed alike to be a mistress, a mother, and a duchess."

And in these few words she painted to perfection alike the one and the other. Gifted with an effrontery which was proof against every mortification, and affecting an ingenuousness which might have misled those who were unacquainted with her real character into a belief that she was unconscious of her fault, Mademoiselle de Fontanges was never happy save when the eyes of the whole court were upon her; and she no sooner discovered that, when wearied by her caprices, the king took refuge in the society and conversation of Madame de Maintenon, than her jealousy exceeded all bounds; and many a vow of vengeance did she utter, whose accomplishment she only deferred until the birth of the child which she was about to bring into the world.

But this child was not fated to exist. It survived only a few months, and even thus it was destined to outlive its young and lovely mother; for in a few short weeks the beauty which had been alike her glory and her bane, had faded; and, with his usual egotism, the passion of the king died with it. Nor did he make an effort to conceal the fact from his dying victim. His desertion, for ere long it became such, was more than she could support; and extreme in all things, she demanded permission to retire to the convent of Port Royal, which was at once conceded; but the exertion might have been spared, for her hours were already numbered; and ere long she became so conscious of the fact, that she entreated, as a last favour, to see the king

once more before she died. Louis XIV. refused. He had an antipathy to death-beds; and he was anxious to forget all subjects of self-reproach; but on this occasion his confessor ventured to expostulate; and at length the worldly monarch was induced to grant the request of the erring girl. He found her faded, withered, and ghastly—all unlike the radiant beauty whom for a few brief months he had worshipped; and, egotist as he was, he could not restrain his tears. Her glassy eyes never left his countenance; her clammy hand was fastened upon his own; her livid lips quivered in their last effort, as she besought him to pay her debts, and sometimes to remember her. Louis promised all she asked; and as she sank back upon her pillow, she gasped out the declaration that she should die happy, as she saw that the king could weep for her.

In a few moments she was unconscious even of his tears.

The indecent exultation manifested by Madame de Montespan on this occasion severed the last link between herself and the monarch; and thenceforward her very name became odious to him. Such a death-bed—a death-bed without repentance, and almost without hope—made an impression even upon his stolid nature, which for a time nearly amounted to remorse; and he found his best feelings outraged by the heartless self-gratulation of the very woman by whose means he had been involved in so tragic a catastrophe. Nor was his aversion lessened by a report which reached his ears, and which is distinctly mentioned by the princess-palatine in her memoirs, that the unhappy young duchess died from poison, which she herself asserted to have been adminis-

tered to her through the agency of Madame de Montespan. Madame de Caylus, however, denies this assertion; but be the fact as it may, it is at all events certain that she was soon forgotten amid the new pleasures and new interests by which she was succeeded. The populace only regretted the brilliant spectacle of her gorgeous coach, with its eight cream-coloured horses, for she had neither sympathized in their sorrows, nor relieved their necessities; while the courtiers merely remembered the profusion of her entertainments, and the splendour of her saloons, and looked forward with confidence to the reign of a new favourite, who might once more supply them with the same luxuries.

CHAPTER IV.

INFLUENCE OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—PÈRE LA CHAISE—BIRTH OF THE DUKE DE BOURGOYNE — A DELICATE MISSION — COURT-CABAL— MADAME DE MONTESPAN—MADAME DE RICHELIEU—INDIGNATION OF THE KING—GENEROSITY OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—EFFECTS OF THE CONSPIRACY—FOREBODINGS OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—A PROVISIONAL RETREAT—THE CONVENT OF ST. JOSEPH—THE PROJECTED PALACE—BIRTH OF THE DUKE D'ANJOU—THE JOURNEY TO FLANDERS—MORTIFICATION OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—PROGRESS OF THE COURT—JOURNEY TO ALSACE—ILLNESS OF THE QUEEN—DEATH OF THE QUEEN—THE RING—CHARACTER OF THE QUEEN—EMOTION OF LOUIS XIV.—THE LYING IN STATE—THE FUNERAL—HEARTLESSNESS OF THE DAUPHIN—ACCIDENT OF THE KING—MADEMOISELLE AT CHOISY—THE ROYAL VISIT—THE LIVERIES—MADEMOISELLE AND THE DUKE DU MAINE—THE MISSION OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—DONATION OF MADEMOISELLE TO THE DUKE DU MAINE—PARTIAL LIBERATION OF LAUZUN—HIS RETURN TO PIGNEROL—HIS CONCESSION AND LIBERATION—HIS DISCONTENT—HIS PRETENSIONS—COLDNESS OF THE KING TOWARDS HIS OLD FAVOURITE—INGRATITUDE OF LAUZUN—LAUZUN A DUKE—SEPARATION OF LAUZUN AND MADEMOISELLE—DEPARTURE OF LAUZUN TO ENGLAND.

THESE expectations were, however, fated to disappointment, for the power of Madame de Maintenon over the king was that of a strong mind over a weak one; Louis XIV. was ill constituted to grapple with the diffi-

culties constantly entailed upon him by his own vices and selfishness; and as he found not only comfort, but also support in the inflexible judgment and sober good sense of the mistress of the robes, he became daily more attached to her society; while she, on her part, found a powerful ally in Père la Chaise, who zealously aided her endeavours to rescue the monarch from a career of profligacy which sullied the glory of his reign, and set a dangerous and baneful example to his subjects. To effect this purpose they adopted at once the wisest and the most effective means, by reminding him that, although still in the full vigour of manhood, his youth was already spent; and that he had as yet attempted little towards his eternal salvation. Let the momentary grievance be what it might, their arguments and their consolations all tended to that one point; and the king listened the more readily as he was constitutionally devout, and had not altogether forgotten the entreaties and example of his mother.

While this revolution was taking place in the spirit of Louis XIV, the dauphiness gave birth to the Duke de Bourgoyne, an event which caused universal joy. "You will hear," says Madame de Sévigné, "of the lively demonstrations of the whole court, and with what eagerness this delight was exhibited to the king, the dauphin, and the queen; what shouts, what firing, what a pouring forth of wine, what a dance of two hundred Swiss guards around their barrels, what cries of *Vive le Roi*, what a ringing of all the bells in Paris, what an explosion of cannon, and what a succession of compliments and harangues, and then all will be told." Bussy-Rabutin, however, enlarges upon this description of the events of the day, by informing us in his memoirs that the king,

in gratitude to God, made a donation of a hundred thousand crowns, for the liberation of imprisoned debtors; a hundred thousand francs to those of Paris, and the remaining two hundred thousand to those of the provinces; and that, even grave and majestic as he was in his deportment, he could scarcely contain his joy; but desiring his guard to disperse, permitted himself to be approached indiscriminately by all comers, to whom he gave his hand to kiss without distinction of ranks; while the Swiss guards, in their enthusiasm, fed their bonfire with every description of timber which fell under their hands, even to a pile of planks which had been prepared to floor the apartments, and the poles of the sedan-chair of the Duke d'Aumont; and, finally, having consumed all the wood within reach, gave a last glory to the flaming pile by the sacrifice of their straw palliasses.

Meanwhile all the bells in Paris and Versailles rang out their endless peal of joy; and labour and sleep appeared alike to be forgotten. In every street and square groups were to be seen drinking, dancing, feasting, and singing; the king himself being their Amphitryon; while Lully, resolved to contribute his portion to the general festival, caused his Perseus to be played gratuitously; and on the day of its representation the audience entered the theatre under a triumphal arch, which at night was brilliantly illuminated; and whence a rising sun, composed of a thousand jets of flame, slowly detached itself, and mounted into the horizon; while the two fountains at the base of the fiery crescent ran wine until midnight.

Bontems, the king's favourite attendant, contemplating the destruction which ensued at Versailles from the

encroachments of the populace who had invaded every avenue to the palace, could at length no longer control his murmurs; and even ventured to point the attention of his royal master to the ruinous effects of the popular enthusiasm; but Louis XIV. was in no mood to speculate upon its results, and answered buoyantly: "Let them enjoy themselves; we can easily renew the walls and floors, while the general joy of a people is of rare occurrence."

The one great drawback to the happiness, not only of the king himself, but also of the dauphin and dauphiness, was, however, the necessity under which they found themselves of listening to the harangues and addresses that poured in upon them on all sides, and by which they were overwhelmed for an entire week. "Heavens and earth!" was at last the exclamation of *Monseigneur* at the close of an oration delivered by the representative spokesman of one of the learned societies, which had been unusually lengthy and abstruse; "how low-spirited I should become if I were long compelled to amuse myself in this way."[1]

The dauphin had flattered himself that when this auspicious event took place, the princess his wife, whose personal importance would be so greatly increased by the fact of her having given an heir to the crown, would consent to appear more frequently in public, and to render her individual court more attractive; but as she resolutely refused to emerge from her retirement, he at length became wearied by the monotony of his own palace, and sought elsewhere for the amusements which he had previously hoped to find at home.

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

The circle of the Princess de Conti was the only one which at that period retained a portion of the elegant licence and sportive wit which had formerly characterised the society of Anne of Austria, and still later that of Louis XIV; and it was, consequently, in her brilliant saloons that the prince took refuge from the monotony of his own deserted apartments.

At the period of Madame de Conti's marriage, the king had appointed as a sort of governess, rendered necessary by her extreme youth, a certain Madame de Bury, a woman of estimable character, fine temper, and perfect high-breeding; and this lady no sooner found herself established in the household of the princess, than she summoned from Dauphiny her niece, Mademoiselle de Choin,[1] whom she placed about the person of her mistress, with the title of maid of honour.

"She was," says Madame de Caylus in one of her sprightly letters; "of an ugliness that was remarkable;" but she was also quick-witted and clever; and ere long the dauphin became so much impressed by her singular turn of mind and powers of amusement, that his preference was observed by the whole circle. Madame de Lillebonne and her two daughters, who, although of the powerful family of Lorraine, were so poor as to find it expedient to make friends by whom they could be maintained in a position suited to their birth, and who had long enjoyed the intimacy of the dauphin, were the first to perceive the influence of Mademoiselle de Choin, and to cultivate her friendship; while many of the nobility, who were aware

[1] Maria Emily Joly de Choin was the descendant of a noble family of Bresse; but originally from Savoy.

of the facility with which the prince suffered himself to be governed by those towards whom he felt a predilection, followed their example; and thus a strong party was formed, which, however, failed to attract the attention of the court, in consequence of the discovery of a cabal, in which both the king himself and Madame de Maintenon were more immediately involved.

The united efforts of Madame de Maintenon and Père la Chaise to effect the great moral change in the habits and feelings of the monarch to which we have elsewhere alluded, had meanwhile been earnestly pursued; and their remonstrances were powerfully assisted by the fact that at this very period, while in a state of robust health, he was suddenly afflicted by a fistula, of so dangerous a character that serious apprehensions were entertained by the faculty of its result.

We have already shown that the monarch had a morbid terror of death; and in this extremity, far from endeavouring to allay his fears, both his confessor and Madame de Maintenon rather strove to increase them, and to excite in his breast a horror of his past excesses. In this attempt they naturally turned his attention to the equivocal nature of his position with the Marquise de Montespan, representing the absolute necessity of its immediate and final termination; and as the period was past when the sacrifice would have been difficult, the king at once admitted the validity of their arguments, and entreated Madame de Maintenon to inform the former favourite of his firm determination never again to regard her in any other light than that of a friend, and the mother of his children.

The commission was one of both delicacy and diffi-

culty; and for a considerable time the prudent mistress of the robes respectfully declined to become the bearer of so serious and responsible a message; but as her reluctance only increased the pertinacity of the suffering monarch, she frankly declared that she could not undertake to make an announcement, which she feared that, once restored to health, the king would not have strength to ratify. This doubt aroused all the pride and self-dependence of the monarch; and assuring her that she did not appreciate his character, he converted his request into a command, when opposition was no longer possible.

The position of Madame de Maintenon in this conjuncture was rendered tenfold more invidious by the fact that a cabal had recently been formed against herself, headed by the Marquise de Montespan, who had secured the co-operation of M. de Louvois and Madame de Richelieu, and of which the aim was the disgrace and dismission of the mistress of the robes from the court. Each was prompted to the attempt by personal jealousy; the marquise was jealous of the king's preference; the minister, of her influence over the royal mind; and Madame de Richelieu of her obligation to one whom she had formerly befriended, when, as the poor and helpless widow Scarron, she had received her into her house, and afforded her both assistance and protection; forgetting at the same time, that to the gratitude of Madame de Maintenon she was at that moment indebted for her appointment of lady of honour to the dauphiness.

The part which the marchioness reserved to herself in this dishonourable drama, was that of rendering Madame de Maintenon ridiculous in the eyes of the princess; an

office in which she was admirably calculated to excel, and to which the antecedents of her rival's history unfortunately lent themselves. The vices of her father, the squalid poverty of her youth, her expulsion by the Ursuline nuns, her numerous lovers, who had, as her enemy asserted, been anything but unsuccessful, and her marriage with a deformed cripple, were all detailed with a bitter but sprightly malice, which enlivened the solitude of the dauphiness; while her assumed ingratitude to Madame de Richelieu afforded an opportunity for high-spirited indignation and virtuous disdain. The province of Madame de Richelieu was less laborious; she had merely to confirm the accusations, and to vouch for the authenticity of the whole narrative; seasoning her comments by malicious insinuations of the delight exhibited by the king in the society of the victim, and his evident annoyance when he was deprived of it; Louvois, meanwhile, contenting himself by directing their machinations, and seizing every available opportunity of strengthening the impression produced upon the mind of the princess by the combined efforts of his associates. The natural result followed; and it ere long became perfectly evident to the conspirators that they had succeeded in inspiring the dauphiness with a marked aversion to her mistress of the robes.

This result was, however, far from sufficient to satisfy their malice, and the same methods were consequently adopted to estrange the queen, in her turn, from Madame de Maintenon, but without effect. From the period at which Louis XIV. had attached himself to her society, and been swayed by her councils, the single-hearted and devoted Maria-Theresa had become conscious of a marked

change in the manner of the king towards herself. She had no longer to encounter the cold and careless indifference which seemed to rebuke her affection; he no longer avoided her society; and even, at times, displayed towards her a tenderness of manner, for which she thanked him with her tears. Thus the attempt to shake her confidence in, and respect for, the stately friend of the monarch proved a signal failure. "Why," she inquired with the frank honesty which formed so marked a feature of her character; "why should I suffer myself to be prejudiced against Madame de Maintenon? So far from having a right or a desire to injure her, I firmly believe that God has raised her up to restore to me the heart of which I had been robbed by the Marquise de Montespan; for never did the king display so much affection towards me as since she has been his friend." And then, as if apprehensive that this declaration would not suffice to convince the enemies of the persecuted mistress of the robes of the extent of her confidence and gratitude towards one to whom she felt herself to be so deeply indebted, she took an early opportunity of presenting to the gratified court-lady her portrait enriched with diamonds; a present which excited the envy of Madame de Montespan, who, as a member of the queen's particular household, considered herself affronted by so invidious a preference.[1]

Meanwhile, carefully as the plot had been carried out, it nevertheless reached the ears of the king; and at once indignant, and weary of these perpetual intrigues, he insisted upon a full and complete explanation, by which Madame de Maintenon was thoroughly justified in

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Caylus.

the eyes of her royal mistress, but nevertheless without securing her confidence or favour; the impression produced upon her mind having been so strong as to render the prejudice which she had conceived against her too powerful to be overcome.

The first impulse of the king, when all the circumstances of the cabal became known to him, was to dismiss Madame de Richelieu, but she was spared this humiliation at the entreaty of Madame de Maintenon herself; who, when she was preparing to obey the royal command already quoted with regard to the Marquise de Montespan, was once more startled to hear Louis XIV. add to his former order, his pleasure that she should moreover instruct the marchioness, in his name, to leave the court altogether.

Again did the persecuted mistress of the robes venture to expostulate and to entreat, but for a time the king was inflexible. He was anxious to free himself from these vexatious annoyances, and he saw no shorter and more effectual method of so doing, than by enforcing the absence of the principal conspirator; nor was it until the perplexed and weeping Madame de Maintenon compelled him to understand the injury which must accrue to herself from such a measure, and the impropriety of her becoming in her own person the bearer of such a sentence, that he consented to limit his severity, and to satisfy himself by the enforcement of his original command.

Not venturing to hope for any further concession, Madame de Maintenon accordingly prepared to fulfil her ungracious mission; and whatever may have been her other faults, it is at least certain that on this occasion she

acted with singular generosity; for, after having announced to the discarded favourite the pleasure of the king, in order to spare her the bitterness of a public revelation of the total cessation of her influence over the mind of the estranged monarch, she entreated her, whenever she had a favour to request, to make herself the medium; an offer of which the mortified marchioness did not hesitate largely to avail herself, in order to preserve her apparent power over the king. Nor did Louvois escape the effects of his imprudence, for although no immediate proofs of the royal displeasure were visited upon him, there can be little doubt that the antipathy of Madame de Maintenon towards this minister owed its commencement to the circumstances just detailed; as well as the coldness of Louis XIV, who thenceforth tolerated him only from a conviction that his services were necessary to the well-being of the kingdom.[1]

Bitterly as the mortification of Madame de Montespan could not fail to be felt, it was nevertheless not altogether unexpected. She had long been painfully conscious of the decrease of her influence; and with that spirit of self-preservation habitual to her, she had, even before the death of the Duchess de Fontanges, resolved to secure to herself a retreat in which she should continue to rule supreme, although in a more limited sphere. In order to effect this purpose in its fullest extent, she determined to construct and endow a convent; not indeed of the gigantic proportions and regal magnificence of those of Val-de-Grace or Fontevrault,[2] but

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

[2] The Abbess of Fontevrault, whose community owed its origin to the Abbey of St. Benoit, founded by Robert d'Arbrissel in 1100,

suited to a small community, where the sisterhood, depending entirely upon her own liberality for their support, would necessarily embrace all her interests, prejudices, and opinions.

The idea flattered her self-love; and she accordingly lost no time in authorizing her steward to select a spot favourable for her design, which he did in the faubourg St. Germain;[1] when, having satisfied herself of its perfect eligibility, the works were immediately commenced; and, by a singular coincidence, the first stone was laid at the very moment in which the Duchess de Fontanges ceased to exist.

The nature of the intended edifice was no sooner publicly ascertained than a rumour became current, that, in imitation of la Vallière, Madame de Montespan was about to take the veil; a report which she did not attempt to contradict, although she smiled at its absurdity. She contemplated a retreat, not a prison; a miniature kingdom, not a place of penance; and even while urging her architect to his greatest speed, and herself overlooking his progress, she resolved to convince the triflers who believed her capable of so inane an act of self-abnegation, that she had far other views.

at Fontevrault on the Maine and Loire, and which had become the principal establishment of the order, held jurisdiction over all the convents of the nuns of St. Benoit. In her house all the princesses of the blood-royal of France were educated; and her position was one of great honour and importance. In 1817, a royal ordonnance appropriated this fine abbey as a place of confinement for culprits of both sexes, condemned to solitary imprisonment for more than twelve months, and for females sentenced to hard labour. It is capable of accommodating 1,200 men, and 500 women.

[1] What still remains of this building is now appropriated to the uses of the war office.

On the birth of the Duke du Maine, the king had presented her with a small but luxurious house in the rue St. André-des-Arcs;[1] but her ambition had long outgrown so circumscribed a dwelling, and she caused the famous Blondel[2] to design for her the plan of a superb hôtel in imitation of the Louvre, of which the probable cost was estimated by the architect at eighteen hundred thousand livres,[3] exclusive of its internal decorations.

This enormous outlay by no means alarmed the marchioness, who once more gave orders for the selection of an appropriate site; and then, anxious to terminate one undertaking before she commenced a second, she so vehemently urged forward her workmen, that the convent was soon completed, and in a condition to receive its inmates; when the haughty foundress bestowed upon it the name of St. Joseph, and busied herself in all the details of its interior economy. Her own portion of the building was superbly although simply fitted up, and opened into the chapel, where her closet, enclosed by glass doors, faced the high altar. Her first decision was declared at the moment in which the community was formed; and was to the effect that she should alone possess the privilege of naming the

[1] Still in existence, and known as No. 61.

[2] Francis Blondel, member of the Academy of Sciences, professor of mathematics at the College of France, adjutant-general, and councillor of state, was born at Ribemont, in Picardy, in 1617. He was the architect of the triumphal arch of the Porte St. Denis; and, in addition to many other works of miscellaneous literature, he wrote a *Course of Architecture*, the *Art of Throwing Bomb-shells*, and a *System of Fortification*. He died in 1696.

[3] A sum exceeding seven millions of livres of the present day.

abbess throughout her life; but that this authority should not devolve upon her heirs; that the great bell was to ring for twenty minutes whenever she visited the sisterhood; and that she was to receive the honours of the incense at high mass and vespers, as foundress of the community.

The great bell, and the humility of the recluse sisters of St. Joseph were unceasing attractions to the imperious marchioness, and her visits to the community were consequently frequent; while the whole affair created so much curiosity at court that Bossuet offered to consecrate the building; when, with her usual insolence, the lady, with a light laugh, bade him reserve his oration for her funeral.

"Be it so;" said the bishop with a profound bow: "to you, madam, I can refuse nothing."[1]

About this period the dauphiness became the mother of a second son, who received the title of Duke d'Anjou; and the king, on the receipt of the welcome intelligence, accompanied his congratulations to the princess by an oriental casket, containing a superb suit of pearls, and four thousand louis-d'ors in gold.

Ever since the birth of the Duke de Bourgoyne the court had entertained a hope that the dauphiness would abandon her secluded habits; but they were fated to disappointment, for she still appeared only on state occasions, and even then with evident repugnance.

The last blow was given to the ambition of Madame de Montespan just as her asylum was completed; for on the July succeeding the death of the Duchess de Fon-

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

tanges, the king, whose health had gradually become re-established, resolved on a journey to Flanders; destined to serve the two-fold purpose of affording amusement to himself and his court, and of awing his neighbours into additional respect, by an exhibition of his magnificence and strength. In this journey he was accompanied by the queen, the dauphin and dauphiness, and their separate suites, in every case selected by himself; and as these journeys were the touchstone of royal favour, great was the consternation of Madame de Montespan when she ascertained that the name of her dreaded rival headed the list of the princess's attendants, while her own, although superintendent of the queen's household, had not found a place. In the excess of her mortification, she hastened to shut herself up at St. Joseph, and even meditated a final retreat to Fontevrault; but when the first paroxysm of her anger had passed by, she contented herself with retiring to her château of Petit-Bourg, accompanied by Mademoiselle de Blois; the king having strictly forbidden the removal of the Count de Toulouse from Paris.

The first halt of the court was at Boulogne in Picardy, where the fortifications were in progress of reparation; and on the following day the king proceeded on horseback to inspect the port of Ambleteuse, whence he pursued his way along the coast to Calais; while the ladies of the court journeyed thither by a more direct route. There the monarch visited the harbour, and amused himself by making excursions upon the water.

The next point of pause was Dunkirk, where the Marquis de Seignelay (the son of Colbert) had stationed a fine ship of war for the use of Their Majesties; which,

under the command of an able officer, went through all the various manœuvres consequent upon a maritime combat and defence; a spectacle entirely novel to the illustrious party, and rendered still more attractive by a sumptuous banquet which terminated the day.

This was succeeded on the morrow by a sham fight between two frigates; separate barks having been prepared for the king and queen, whence to witness the combat, of which the pleasure was enhanced by the extreme calmness and splendour of the weather. At the close of this amusement, the monarch, after having expressed his entire satisfaction to the officers and crews of the several vessels, proceeded on board the man-of-war, in order to receive the congratulations of the Earl of Oxford, the Duke of Marlborough, and the Duke of Villa-Hermosa, (the Spanish governor of the Low Countries,) who had been despatched by their several sovereigns to express their sympathy on his recovery. A lofty throne, covered by a costly awning, was erected on the quarter-deck of the ship; and the audience had all the pomp and ceremonial which could possibly be required by the ostentatious monarch.

On quitting Dunkirk the court made a regular progress to Ypres, and reached Lille on the first of August; whence, after a halt of several days, they proceeded to Valenciennes and Condé, everywhere greeted with the most enthusiastic welcome; and after returning to Sedan by Quénoy, Bouchain, and Cambray, finally re-entered Versailles at the end of the month.[1]

During this brief absence, Louis XIV. had not, how-

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

ever, suffered himself to be absorbed by pleasure; but, faithful to the spirit of self-aggrandizement, which was his leading passion, had invested the important city of Luxembourg with an army of thirty thousand men, under the command of the Marshal de Créqui; and taken it after a resistance of eight days. Thence he marched upon the Electorate of Trèves, and possessed himself without difficulty of the town; which was nevertheless condemned to see its fine fortifications levelled to the ground, while fire, pillage, and ruin extended throughout the whole electorate; the destructive genius of Louvois having suggested that these unnecessary spoliations would tend to increase the authority of his royal master, by inspiring a greater terror of his power.

In 1683, while the Turks and Germans were contending upon the plains of Hungary, the king, followed by his whole court, (whence Madame de Montespan was once more excluded,) proceeded to the frontiers of Alsace, where he reviewed his army, and gave a succession of brilliant fêtes. The season chanced to be one of excessive sultriness; and the queen, although a native of Spain, suffered so severely from the heat, that as soon as it could be accomplished the royal party returned in all haste to Versailles; where the unfortunate Maria Thesesa had no sooner arrived than she complained of indisposition, which, although at first slight, rapidly increased in severity, and an abscess formed under her arm.

At this crisis, Fagon,[1] her physician, in opposition to

[1] Guy Crescent Fagon was born in Paris in 1638, and devoting himself to the study of medicine, obtained his diploma as a physician in 1664. He was the first member of the faculty who upheld the theory of the circulation of the blood. In consequence of his

the opinions of all her other medical attendants, resolved on letting blood. At eleven in the morning the queen had declared herself in a state of intense suffering; at mid-day a vein was opened, and an emetic was administered; and at three in the afternoon she was a corpse.

Thus perished, to all appearance through the profound ignorance or wilful mismanagement of her medical attendant, the unfortunate Maria Theresa, just as she had begun to hope for a return of the affection which from the first day of their marriage she had lavished upon her royal husband; the consequence of whose undisguised indifference had been a timidity in his presence, which she had never been able to overcome. To the last, she trembled whenever he approached her; and whether it were by the directions of the king, or simply from a desire to conciliate him, she bore with the presence and society of his mistresses without comment or expostulation, and even carried her indulgence so far as to caress their children; but she never degraded herself by any demonstration of regard towards themselves so long as they persisted in their irregularities.

Her partiality for Madame de Maintenon, whose commerce with the monarch was always irreproachable, we have already cited; but its most convincing proof was given in the fact that on her death-bed she withdrew a

botanical knowledge he was entrusted with the plantations of the Royal Gardens, by which he obtained the title of professor of botany and chemistry. In 1668 he was appointed physician to the Dauphiness, and subsequently to the Queen and Princes of France; and in 1694 became head physician to Louis XIV. In 1699 he was admitted a member of the French Academy, and in 1718 he died. He left behind him among other works, *Treatises* on *Bark*, *Coffee*, and *Tobacco*, and a *Latin Poem on Botany*.

superb ring from her finger, and presented it to that lady, to whom the last words which she uttered were addressed; "Adieu, my very dear marchioness," she said in a feeble accent; "to you I confide the happiness of the king."[1]

Blameless in her conduct, and naturally amiable, Maria Theresa no sooner became the wife of Louis XIV, than she made it the one great business of her existence to study his pleasure in all things, however it might militate against her own comfort and happiness; and although deficient both in education and intellect, she possessed a dignity of deportment well suited to her exalted station. Short in stature, and inclined to corpulency, she appeared taller when seated than either walking or dancing, having acquired an ungainly habit of bending her knees, by which she lost much of her height. She was passionately fond of play, and seldom passed an evening without cards; although she constantly lost largely, from her inability to master the difficulties of any game that she attempted. Her passionate attachment to the king was never shaken, even by his constant infidelities; and whenever he chanced to smile as he addressed her, she could scarcely control her delight.

Louis XIV. had never loved her, but she had compelled his esteem, and he wept bitterly at her death; as, however, he had previously wept at his separation from Mary de Mancini, la Vallière, Henrietta of Orleans, and Mademoiselle de Fontanges, although with a less remorseful feeling; and she had no sooner expired than he retired to St. Cloud; where he was followed by the

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle, and Madame de Montespan.

dauphiness and Madame de Maintenon; who both appeared before him, attired in deep mourning, and with so much grief imprinted on their countenances, that the king, whose mood chanced to be infinitely less lugubrious than their own, jested with them on their excessive sorrow.[1]

On the third day after the queen's decease, the monarch, accompanied by the dauphin, and all the members of the royal family, with the exception of MADEMOISELLE, who pleaded indisposition, assembled in the Hall of Peace at Versailles, which was hung with black, and furnished with four temporary altars, to sprinkle the body with holy water; and the aspect of the funereal chamber with the small coffin in the midst, in which reposed all that was mortal of his late gentle and forgiving wife, produced a visible effect upon the king, who exclaimed as he entered; "Kind and forbearing friend! This is the first sorrow that you have caused me throughout twenty years."

The ceremony of aspersion was no sooner terminated than the monarch and his court again retired to St. Cloud, there to await the removal of the royal corpse to St. Denis, which previously to its interment lay in state for ten days; perpetual masses being performed at each of the altars from seven in the morning until dusk; and finally the body of Maria Theresa left for ever the gorgeous palace which had been her home, for the sombre vaults of the antique abbey. A long train of carriages followed the funeral car, filled with the great officers of the crown, and the ladies who

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Caylus.

had composed her household; and the procession was escorted by a numerous body of guards, gendarmes, and musketeers. Nothing, however, could exceed the indecency with which the journey was performed. From all the carriages issued the sounds of heartless jest, and still more heartless laughter; while the troops had no sooner reached the plain of St. Denis, than they dispersed in every direction, some galloping right and left, and others firing at the birds that were flying over their heads.[1]

But even yet more revolting was the conduct of several members of the royal family. The dauphin, instead of confining himself to his apartment on the day of the funeral, in order at least to assume the semblance of regret, and to avoid giving offence to public feeling, proceeded to the Palais-Royal, where he passed the evening gaily, in the society of the dauphiness, the princess-palatine, and a score of his favourite associates; after having amused himself for an hour or two in the forenoon by the feats of a learned pony, which had been brought to the fair of St. Laurent for exhibition, and which was ordered to the Tuileries by the prince, in consequence of a command issued by the king, that the court should abstain from visiting the fair from respect to Her Majesty's memory, although he declined the proposition of the city authorities to defer it until a more fitting season.

Nor did Louis XIV. himself display more propriety of conduct, having passed the day in hunting; an amusement which was, however, abruptly terminated by the circum-

[1] Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

stance of his horse plunging headlong into a ditch so overgrown with vegetation as to deceive its instinct, and by throwing the king over its head, causing the dislocation of his arm.[1]

Some time before the death of the queen, MADEMOISELLE, who had regained a portion of the good opinion of her royal cousin by the rigid observance of her court duties, despite her grief at the protracted captivity of the Marquis de Lauzun, purchased the estate of Choisy, near Vitry; where she amused herself by building a palace, of which the fame soon reached the ears of Louis XIV, and so excited his curiosity that he proposed to Madame de Montespan that they should pay the princess a visit unannounced, and thus surprise her in the midst of her operations.

The exterior of the building somewhat disappointed the monarch, who considered the elegant simplicity of its architecture not sufficiently elaborate or regal; but the situation he declared to be faultless. The palace stood on the higher bank of the Seine, surrounded by magnificent gardens; and boasted stately woods perforated by spacious avenues, and washed by the waters of the river.

MADEMOISELLE did the honours of her new abode with unconcealed delight; and, with all the petty pride of a *parvenue*, led the king into a handsome gallery hung with the portraits of her ancestors, relatives, and allies, each duly furnished with the name and rank of the original: where she drew his attention to the fact, that no less than three full-length likenesses of himself decorated the principal apartments.

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

On reaching the state bed-chamber the princess preceded her royal guest; but her precaution was not sufficiently well taken to prevent the malicious marchioness from discovering that she had hastily caused the removal of a portrait of Lauzun which hung above the fire-place; while the king expressed his surprise that throughout the whole suite of rooms he had perceived no likeness of the duke her father. MADEMOISELLE accounted for the circumstance by declaring that she had purposely delayed its admission to her saloons, as its appearance there would have entailed the necessity of its accompaniment by that of her step-mother Marguerite of Lorraine, and that she intended to open her house only to her friends.

Little did the princess imagine the result to which this remark would tend, as Louis XIV. replied with a smile that he was the more happy under those circumstances, to see that she had already afforded space to those of the Duke du Maine, and the Count de Toulouse: especially as he had a favour to request of her. Every one was aware of her attachment to the former, who was now no longer a child, and for whom he was about to form a household; and the request which he had to advance, was her permission that the duke might assume her liveries.

Delighted by so eminent a mark of favour, MADEMOISELLE replied by expressing her sense of the honour designed towards her by the monarch; and with a sigh of sentiment somewhat discordant with her mature age —for she was at that period in her fifty-second year— she added, that she only wished the opportunity were afforded to her of offering a more signal evidence of her desire to oblige the son of His Majesty.

The king made no reply, but these words did not fall

unheeded; and he had scarcely passed the boundary of Choisy on his return to Versailles, when he recalled them to the recollection of his companion; remarking that had her manner been more conciliating, he would have engaged her to request an interview with the princess, and to have urged her to explain their actual meaning. To this suggestion Madame de Montespan haughtily replied that she could not consent to subject herself to any contact with the imperious and overbearing humour of MADEMOISELLE, for the furtherance of a merely equivocal speculation; but that doubtlessly Madame de Maintenon, who was sincerely attached to the Duke du Maine, and who was more pliant than herself, would readily undertake the mission, if such were the desire of His Majesty, and prove a much more welcome ambassadress than herself.

Satisfied of the truth of this observation, the king accordingly explained to the mistress of the robes the disposition of MADEMOISELLE as regarded her pupil; and she at once cheerfully undertook to conduct him to Choisy to pay his respects to the princess, and to offer his acknowledgments for her condescension on the subject of her liveries; pledging herself not to suffer any opportunity of serving his interests to escape her.

Her success was perfect. The little duke unconsciously played his part to admiration; and when MADEMOISELLE had wept out all her sorrows upon the bosom of the gentle and sympathizing visitor who listened with moistened eyes and condoling words, she at length threw herself on the generosity of Madame de Maintenon; declaring that satisfied of her influence over the mind of the king, she would place all her hopes of

happiness in her hands; and that, should she succeed in obtaining the liberation of Lauzun, she would present to her one of her finest estates.

"Rather;" said her companion; "if indeed Your Highness be willing to make so great a sacrifice, bestow that estate at once and unconditionally upon our dear Duke du Maine; and trust to my assurance that the king, touched by so great a benefit conferred upon his favourite son, will, in the excess of his paternal affection, willingly concede a point which by any other means he can only reluctantly suffer to be wrung from him, without leaving one hope that it will ever be followed by any important return of favour."

MADEMOISELLE did not hesitate. She at once appreciated the force of this reasoning; and when Madame de Maintenon at length quitted Choisy, she was authorized to announce to the king that the princess had made a donation to the Duke du Maine of the countship of Eu, and the sovereignty of Dombes; following up her tidings by soliciting the liberty of the Marquis de Lauzun; which was in so far conceded at the instant, that an order was issued, authorizing the prisoner to proceed to Bourbon l'Archambault for the benefit of the waters, under the guard of M. Maupertuis, and a detachment of musketeers.

As MADEMOISELLE had previously bestowed the very estates, which, in order to effect the liberation of Lauzun, she now presented to the Duke du Maine, upon the marquis himself, it became necessary, in order to render the donation strictly legal, that it should be ratified by him; and in the hope of inducing him to consent to this spoliation, Madame de Montespan

followed him to Bourbon, to arrange the terms upon which it was to be conceded. Rejoiced, however, as Lauzun had been to find himself once more comparatively free, and to have escaped the gloomy prison latterly rendered still more melancholy by the death of Fouquet, he resisted all the blandishments, and braved all the violence of the baffled marchioness; declaring that he would rather return to Pignerol, and end his days between the four walls of a dungeon, than submit to such an alternative as the cession of the required estates.

Once more, therefore, he became a prisoner; but the following year he again received permission to visit Bourbon, and it would appear that the intervening twelve months of captivity, after the glimpse of liberty which had been afforded him, overcame his philosophy; for it is certain that, after sundry interviews with Madame de Montespan, whom he found domesticated there with her invalid daughter on his arrival, and for whom he evinced a regard and attention which extorted the acknowledgments of the king, he consented to ratify the donation to the Duke du Maine; on receiving, in lieu of the contested lordships, the duchy of St. Fargeau, then let on lease at twenty-two thousand livres annually; and the town and barony of Thiers, in Auvergne, one of the finest estates in the province; together with an income of eight thousand livres on the duties of Languedoc; although, regardless of this additional sacrifice on the part of MADEMOISELLE, he made an extreme merit of his concession; and complained that the equivalent was so disproportioned that he felt considerable difficulty in accepting it.[1]

The necessary papers were, however, eventually signed,

[1] Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

and M. de Lauzun was set at liberty, upon the understanding that he was not to quit the provinces of Anjou and Touraine. He endured this exile for four years, after having suffered an imprisonment of the previous eleven; but such an arrangement by no means met the views of the princess, who complained that she had been deceived; and who was unsparing in her reproaches of the conduct of Madame de Montespan, by whose representations she had been misled into a measure by which she found herself impoverished in means, and almost equally unhappy in position; and as she expressed herself publicly and in strong terms, Louis XIV. at length considered it expedient to withdraw the onerous condition attached to the liberation of Lauzun, and to permit his return to the capital; limiting even this concession, however, by an absolute command that he should not fix his residence within two leagues of any of the royal palaces.[1]

Nevertheless, he was free; and MADEMOISELLE, convinced that she was at length about to realize her dreams of happiness, was preparing to set forth to meet him in a superb equipage drawn by six horses, when the king caused it to be privately intimated to her that she would do well to be less demonstrative, until she had ascertained in how far M. de Lauzun might prove worthy of her excessive regard; for the ungrateful aversion of the marquis towards his benefactress had long been known to the monarch; and he dreaded lest the superannuated passion of his royal cousin should excite a ridicule in the world, from which even her exalted rank would be inadequate to preserve her. Time alone, as he well knew, could suffice to open her eyes to so ungracious a truth; and

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

meanwhile, all representation and expostulation were useless; and he, consequently, contented himself by controlling, to the extent of his power, the excess of her imprudence.

Lauzun, although a brave man, was full of the most extravagant caprices; and appropriated all the good fortune which fell into his way as a natural tribute to his deserts, while he was utterly incapable of steadily pursuing such a line of conduct as might have justified the belief. The king had pardoned him out of consideration for the feelings, and gratitude for the generosity of MADEMOISELLE to the Duke du Maine; but he could no longer be deceived by the outward seeming of the hollow-hearted courtier; and, resolved never again to suffer him near his person, he authorized the sale of his company in the body-guards, and his command in the *Becs-des-Corbins*,[1] directing M. Colbert to pay over to him the amount, with all the arrears that had accumulated during his captivity; a sum which collectively produced a capital of nine hundred and eighty thousand livres.[2]

This was immediately transmitted to the duke in bills upon the treasury, which were as available as ready money; but, instead of receiving the kindness of the king with gratitude, the infatuated Lauzun burst into a frenzy of rage, and threatened to consign the treasury bills to the flames; declaring that he desired to retain his position at court, and not to receive money for which he had no use.

[1] The *Bec-de-Corbin* was a sort of short halbert, or partisan, of which the blade was fashioned like the beak of a raven; and which was carried by the companies of noblemen who formed the immediate body-guard of the sovereign.

[2] Nearly 4,000,000 of the present day.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. consented to permit him to appear once more in his presence; and received him with a marked although chilling courtesy, which even his repeated genuflexions and elaborate professions were unable to animate into a more hopeful welcome. Nor did his appearance tend to ingratiate him with the punctilious monarch; for by an impertinent affectation, and as if with a view of recalling the extent of his imprisonment, the marquis presented himself in the same court-suit which he had worn before his incarceration, and a wig of similar date; a circumstance rendered the more glaring by the fact, that the costume, being modified yearly, carried its date without a possibility of error. No remark was, however, vouchsafed upon the subject by the king; while curiosity, amusement at his eccentricities, and, in many cases, a wish to mortify the imperious princess by withdrawing him from her society, opened to the marquis all the hôtels of the nobility. *Monsieur* invited him to St. Cloud and the Palais-Royal; the dauphin received him with marked favour; and he found himself once more the spoiled child of the court circle.

From the moment of his liberation he displayed the most heartless ingratitude to MADEMOISELLE, whose absurdities, engendered by a weak and unworthy preference, however they might have excited the smiles and comments of the idle, should have been sacred in his eyes; nor did he even seek to see her until after his presentation to the king, alleging that his long captivity had so seriously impaired his health, that he was unequal to any great exertion; while, on the following day, when he visited her at Choisy, he assumed all the authority of a husband; and was audacious enough to accuse her of

wanton extravagance in purchasing such an estate, and constructing such a palace, when she had parks and châteaux enough already, and must be aware how greatly he should be in need of money; adding, that as she had seen fit to do so, the only reparation which she could make was by dislodging her pages and officers of the household from their wing of the building, and fitting up a suite of apartments for himself, where he could occasionally pass his time, and entertain his friends; and providing an equipage with six horses for his especial use during his residence.

Nothing, in short, could exceed his arrogance and presumption; and even while he put forward these extraordinary and unbecoming claims, the unfortunate self-victim of his egotism became painfully aware that she was at once the object of his repugnance and of his ridicule; and that the hours which she had fondly hoped would have been devoted to herself were spent with the different ladies of the court, and at the gaming-table; where his excesses were the theme of universal comment.

Nor was neglect the only indignity with which he visited her weakness even in her presence; for while princes of the blood who had become the husbands of the princesses of the royal family, continued to treat their wives with all the respect exacted by their propinquity to the throne, the upstart courtier upon whom MADEMOISELLE had lavished an affection as exaggerated as it was ill-placed, not satisfied by bowing her pride to his own level, ventured, in the excess of his unmanly insolence, to degrade her to the rank of an inferior; and on one occasion when he returned from hunting, reeking with wet and covered with mud, was even seen to throw

himself upon a velvet sofa in the apartment of the princess, exclaiming authoritatively: "Louise de Bourbon, draw off my boots."

Further forbearance was, of course, impossible; and as, not satisfied with this first insult, the infatuated man made a gesture with his foot which called all the blood of her royal ancestors to her cheek and brow, the granddaughter of Henry IV. drew herself up to her full height; and, waving her hand haughtily, retorted: "Leave the room, Sir; and remember that I henceforth forbid you to appear in my presence."

After such an occurrence, it can scarcely, therefore, be a subject of surprise, that wearied at last of so invidious a position, in which, coupled with the annoyances of a wife, she was subjected also to the indignities of a mistress, MADEMOISELLE should, as a parting present, obtain for him the brevet of a duke, and then declare that she left him at full liberty to pursue his career as he might see fit, provided he attempted no further interference with herself.

The new duke at once accepted these conditions; and dissatisfied with the persevering coldness of the king, solicited the royal permission to reside for a time in England. The request was immediately granted; and in a few weeks Lauzun departed, little suspecting the prominent part which he would there be called upon to play, and to which we shall hereafter have occasion to allude.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH OF COLBERT—HIS UNPOPULARITY—HIS NOBLE WORKS—HIS DEATH-BED—HIS FUNERAL—HIS SUCCESSORS—HIS CHILDREN—POLICY OF LOUVOIS—THE BOMBARDMENT OF GENOA—TREATY OF PEACE—SUBMISSION OF THE DOGE—PALACE OF VERSAILLES—RECEPTION OF THE GENOESE REPRESENTATIVES—MOT OF THE DOGE—INCREASED GRAVITY OF THE KING—CHANGE OF COSTUME—DAILY ETIQUETTE—THE FEMALE DEVOTEES—INFLUENCE OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—HER MENTAL ATTRIBUTES—HER COURT—THE OFFICE OF CHARITY—FOUNDATION OF ST. CYR—THE MONKS OF ST. DENIS—THE CANONESSES—THE ABBÉ DE FÉNÉLON—A FORCED VOCATION—POSITION OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—THE REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES—THE ABBÉ DU CHAYLA—HIS SUFFERINGS—HIS CRUELTIES—SIGNING OF THE REVOCATION.

THE year 1683 was destined to be one of bereavement to Louis XIV. Colbert, whose health had long been giving way under the weight of his perpetual labours, was not destined long to survive his royal mistress; and despite all the magnificent services which he had rendered to his country, he was regretted neither by the sovereign nor the people. Louis XIV. disliked him, because he was obnoxious to Madame de Maintenon and Louvois; the nobility, because, although a man of obscure birth, he had succeeded in raising himself to eminence, both social and political; the citizens, because

he had effected the suppression of the revenues of the hôtel de Ville; and the populace, because he had become powerful and wealthy; and that thus he was, in their eyes, a legitimate object of hatred.[1] Naturally simple and unassuming in his deportment, Colbert was, nevertheless, quite conscious of his just value. He desired, above all things, the prosperity of France, and the glory of her monarch; and to secure these immense advantages, he sacrificed alike his time, his health, and his prejudices.

His works are his best eulogy. He found the resources of the kingdom crippled by a long civil war, and he restored them by an extended commerce: he dug canals, formed harbours, created a formidable navy, and erected arsenals, barracks, hospitals, and manufactories. He organized colonies, and built innumerable fortresses, aqueducts, fountains, and bridges. To him Paris is indebted for its Observatory, and the royal edifice of the Invalides; and France, for the stately palaces of the Tuileries, Vincennes, Marly, with its stupendous hydraulic machine, and the means of completing the vast and regal pile of Versailles, with its marble Trianon. He it was who founded the Gobelins; and raised the Royal Library above the gardens and galleries of the Mazarin palace, with its vast and costly collection of books, manuscripts, and medals; and when overtaken by death in his sixty-fourth year, he was occupied in the erection of the spacious pile of the Salpêtrière, and the colonnade of the Louvre; two undertakings which would have sufficed of themselves to immortalize his memory.

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

Nevertheless, the popular feeling against him was so strong, that it was not considered expedient to pay him the respect of a public funeral; nor would Louis XIV. permit his son the Marquis de Seignelay either to leave the palace to attend his death-bed, or to visit him in his own person. Almost in his dying moments, a gentleman of the royal chamber was despatched by the monarch to ask tidings of his condition; and this was the only courtesy which was vouchsafed to the upright and zealous minister, to whom France was indebted for the prosperity which had, at that period, placed her at the head of all the nations of Europe. Even this, however, might have been spared; for as the messenger approached his bed, the dying sufferer turned away, exclaiming; "I will not hear that man spoken of again. If I had done for God what I have done for him, I should have been saved ten times over; and now I know not what may be my fate."

On the morrow of his death, at one o'clock in the morning, the body of Colbert was deposited in a shabby hearse, and conveyed to the church of St. Eustache, escorted only by a few of the officers of the city watch. The Marquis de Louvois succeeded to his most important offices, Seignelay, his elder son, merely retaining his appointment as secretary of state to the navy; while Louvois obtained, among others, that of superintendent of public works, which had been promised to the younger, (M. de Blainville Colbert,) by the king himself.[1]

The other children of the deceased minister were Louis, Abbot of Notre Dame de Bon Port, and prior of Rueil; Charles Edward, Knight of Malta; and the three

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

duchesses of Beauvilliers, Saint Agnan, Mortemart, and Chevreuse, to each of whom the king had presented the dowry of a million of livres.

The policy of Colbert had been peace; and, until his death, Louvois, at once his rival and his enemy, had constantly been an advocate for war, well knowing the thirst of Louis XIV. for military fame; but his adversary was no sooner in the grave, than Louvois, in his turn, began to deprecate all idea of foreign aggression; believing that, in his new capacity of comptroller of the public works, he might, by encouraging the monarch in his taste for building, secure to himself an undivided influence which would render him all-powerful. He had, however, an unsuspected enemy to contend against in the person of the Marquis de Seignelay; who, as minister of marine, resolved to dispute in his turn the popularity of his father's enemy, and thus to acquire to himself some portion of the royal favour. With this view he merely changed the theatre of war; and, instead of threatening Flanders and Germany, turned his attention to the Mediterranean.

He had not long to seek either for the scene of his meditated exploits, or the pretext upon which they were to be founded. Genoa had excited the indignation of Louis XIV. on several occasions, any one of which would have sufficed to a monarch so tenacious of his prerogative, and so prompt in taking offence. Algiers had been already reduced to submission; and Seignelay had contributed to its surrender. It is therefore not surprising that the king turned a willing ear to the representations of the zealous and ardent minister of marine; and despatched without hesitation two *lettres de cachet*, one of

which directed the exempt of the provost-marshal immediately to secure the person of the Sieur Marini, the Genoese envoy; while the other authorized M. de Besemaux the governor of the Bastille to receive him into that fortress, permitting him, however, the privilege of exercise.

Finally, the French fleet, destined to avenge the wounded honour of Louis XIV, sailed from Toulon on the 6th May, 1684, and arrived before Genoa on the 17th of the same month. It consisted of fourteen large ships, twenty galleys, ten bomb-ketches, and several frigates; the larger vessels were under the command of the veteran Admiral Duquesne, and the galleys under that of the Duke de Mortemar, the brother-in-law of Seignelay, who accompanied the expedition in person; and who, full of ambition, courage, intellect, and activity, would not consent to forego, in his character of minister, the honours of the enterprise.

On anchoring before Genoa, several thousand bomb-shells were directed against the city, which reduced a great portion of its marble edifices to powder; and four thousand troops were then landed, who, advancing to the very gates, burnt the faubourg of San Pietro d'Arena, and compelled the authorities to make submission in order to save their city, and avert its total ruin.[1] The damage caused by this bombardment was estimated at nearly a hundred millions of livres; and Seignelay, omnipotent amid the havoc to which he had been mainly instrumental, caused the doge to be informed, that if he did not, without loss of time, offer to the king his master the satisfaction which was required from him for

[1] Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

the insults that he had offered to the French nation, he should return in the ensuing year, and recommence hostilities. This done, the fleet weighed anchor and returned home, without vouchsafing further parley.

A treaty of peace was, however, concluded on the 2d of February, 1685, and the Genoese envoy was liberated. The first article of this treaty set forth that "The doge then in office, and four of the senators, should proceed in the course of the following month, or, at the latest, before the 10th of April, to the city of Marseilles, whence they should journey to whatsoever place His Majesty might at the moment honour by his presence; and that, being then and there admitted to an audience, attired in their state robes, the said doge, acting as spokesman, should express in the name of the republic of Genoa, their extreme regret at having incurred the displeasure of His Majesty; and should make use, throughout the course of his address, of the most submissive and respectful expressions; and such as should tend to demonstrate their sincere desire to merit for the future, and carefully to maintain, the good will of His Majesty."

By virtue of this article of the treaty the Imperial Doge Lescaro left Genoa on the 29th of March, accompanied by the Senators Lomelino, Garebardo, Durazzo, and Salvago; and on the 18th of April took up his abode in a spacious hôtel of the faubourg St. Germain, which had been prepared for him, in order to await the promised audience, which was not conceded until the 15th of May, when the Marshal d'Humières was sent to conduct him to Versailles; but on his refusing to allow the marshal to walk at his right hand, M. d'Humières was recalled,

and replaced by M. de Bonneuil, an individual of inferior rank; and the doge was at the same time informed that he must have the arms withdrawn from his carriage, this distinction being reserved to sovereigns, and persons of the blood royal.

The palace of Versailles was at that period, although still unfinished, sufficiently magnificent to impress the minds of the Genoese representatives with a high idea of the splendour of the monarch to whom they were about to tender their submission; and already surpassed the fading glories of Fontainebleau and St. Germain. Every obstacle had been overcome, but at a fearful sacrifice of human life. For the space of three months cart-loads of dead labourers had been borne away from amid the waste of hewn stone, destroyed by the impurity of the atmosphere, and exhausted with toil. Now, however, the regal pile bore no evidence of the blood by which its walls had been cemented; no vestige of the suffering through which it had grown into majesty and beauty. Amid stately trees, transported at enormous cost from the forests of Fontainebleau, Marly, and St. Germain, already rose on the soft turf of spacious lawns, and amid groups of flowering shrubs, the marble creations of Coysevox,[1] Giran-

[1] Antoine Coysevox, a celebrated sculptor, was born at Lyons in 1640. At the age of twenty-seven years he proceeded to Alsace in order to decorate the superb palace of Saverna for the Cardinal de Furstemberg. On his return to France he became a member of the Academy of Art, and produced several busts of Louis XIV, and other members of the royal family, and adorned by his genius several of the royal residences. The animation and delicacy of his figures won for him the appellation of the Vandyke of sculpture. His principal works are the equestrian statue of Louis XIV; the monument of Colbert; the figures of the Dordogne, the Garonne, and the Masne; the groups of *Abundance*, *Castor*, and *Pollux*; the *Stooping*

don,[1] Desjardins,[2] and Puget.[3] On the ceilings already began to breathe, beneath the pencils of Le Brun and Mignard,[4] a mythological world, in which Louis XIV. and

Venus, the *Shell Nymph*, the *Hamadryad*, and the *Piping Fawn*. Coysevox died in Paris in 1720.

[1] François Girandon was born at Troyes in 1630. This famous statuary and architect was the pupil of Laurent Mazière, and succeeded Le Brun as inspector-general of the national sculpture. In the year 1657 he became a member of the Academy of Painting, a professor in 1659, a rector in 1674, and chancellor in 1695. His most striking productions were the tomb of Cardinal Richelieu, the equestrian statue of Louis XIV, (which was destroyed in 1792) the *Rape of Proserpine*, and the groups which embellished the baths of Apollo at Versailles. He died in 1715.

[2] Martin Bogaert Desjardins, a celebrated sculptor, born at Bréda in Holland in 1632, only commenced the study of his art at an advanced age. He principally distinguished himself by his skill in casting statues and monuments in bronze. He executed a statue of Louis XIV. for the city of Lyons; and also produced a virgin in marble, a group representing the cardinal virtues, and the tomb of his friend, Mignard, the painter. He died at Paris in 1694.

[3] Pierre Puget, surnamed the Michel Angelo of France, was born at Marseilles in 1623; and was sent at the age of fifteen to Rome by his father, who was himself a sculptor. He commenced his studies as a painter, but soon concentrated all his genius upon the sister art; in which he progressed so rapidly, that after his return home he was once more sent to Italy by Fouquet, on a mission connected with his profession; where he was detained until 1653, in consequence of the dismissal of his patron from office. When he again reached France, Colbert conferred upon him a pension of 1,200 crowns; and after a residence of six or seven months in Paris, he ultimately returned to his native city, where he died in 1694; and where his memory is still held in such honour, that a lofty cliff overhanging the sea, whose outline bears a considerable resemblance to a human head, is called to this day, *la tête de Puget*. His principal works are the *Milon of Crotona*, and the *Andromeda*, which won for him from Louis XIV. the title of "the Inimitable."

[4] Pierre Mignard was the most celebrated portrait painter of his day; but his best works were considered to be the ceilings of the

the members of his family were represented in the garb and with the attributes of the heathen deities; but as if even this luxury of splendour did not suffice for the occasion, additional objects of taste and show were lavished on every side; and the throne prepared for the monarch excited the astonishment even of his own court.

Louis XIV. had caused this throne to be erected at the termination of the great gallery, near the Hall of Peace; and beside him stood the Dauphin, the Duke de Chartres,[1] the Duke de Bourbon-Condé, the Duke du Maine, and the Count de Toulouse. On either side of the gallery an amphitheatre had been raised, and covered with crimson velvet for the accommodation of the ladies of the court; while the nobles, arranged in two lines at their feet, formed a double avenue through which the doge and his attendants passed to the foot of the throne. When the king entered and took his seat, the blaze of the jewels with which he was covered dazzled the eyes of the spectators; and as the doge approached, he placed his hat upon his head, and commanded him to resume the cap of embroidered crimson velvet which he had withdrawn: but the senators remained bareheaded, while the princes of the blood stood covered like the monarch.

The act of submission which had been dictated by Seignelay was then read by the doge, after he had been, as a mark of indulgence on the part of Louis, accommodated

gallery at St. Cloud, the paintings in the lesser gallery at Versailles, the dome of the convent of Val-de-Grâce, and the superb painting of *St. Charles Borromeo administering the sacrament to the plague-stricken at Milan.* He also excelled as a copyist of the old masters. He died in 1695.

[1] The son of the Duke d'Orleans.

with a folding-stool opposite to his own seat. The voice in which it was delivered was firm and haughty, although occasionally as it proceeded, the velvet cap was raised for an instant and then replaced. At its conclusion, however, the doge withdrew it altogether, and by a simultaneous impulse of courtesy all the princes followed his example.

The king listened throughout with grave politeness; and at the termination of the ceremony treated both the doge and the senators with dignified politeness and magnificent liberality. All the rising wonders of Versailles were exhibited to them; a ball was given in their honour; they were received by the dauphin and the princesses; and on their departure the king presented to his new ally a magnificent box adorned with his portrait, and a suite of tapestry from the Gobelins.

As the Genoese envoys were about to leave the palace, the Marquis de Seignelay, anxious to flatter the self-love of the monarch, inquired of the stately Lescaro, who, despite the difficulties of his mission, had never, even for a moment, forgotten his dignity, what amid all the wonders of Versailles, had caused him the most surprise? "The fact of my finding myself there"—was the calm reply.

The death of the queen produced no change whatever in the habits of the court. Louis XIV. had always been grave in his deportment, and this gravity merely increased. Always attentive to his religious observances, his devotion had become more strongly marked since his intimacy with Madame de Maintenon; and, as we have already observed elsewhere, he had from the age of thirty-five years greatly altered his style of dress. The momentary re-adoption of excessive magnificence in his personal adjustment during his passion for the Duchess de Fon-

tanges did not survive her decease; and he thenceforward selected some dark shade of brown, occasionally relieved by a slight embroidery of gold, and sometimes only fastened by a single gold button; or a coat of black velvet. His inner vest was, however, always elaborately embroidered, and composed of green, blue, and even crimson stuff; but he displayed no rings, nor any jewels, save in his shoe and knee buckles, and hat-band. Contrary to all precedent, he also wore his blue ribbon beneath his vest, save on state occasions, when he suffered it to depend at its full length, encrusted with precious stones estimated at eight or ten millions. The hat with its double row of plumes was also discarded; and in its place he substituted a less capacious beaver, ornamented only by a single feather.

The etiquette of his daily existence was rigorously laid down, nor did he ever deviate from its stringent and oppressive formality, but made a species of religion of its strict and minute observance; an example which engendered a large amount of hypocrisy among the inhabitants of the court; and Madame de Caylus relates, on this subject, an amusing anecdote which merits mention.

M. de Brisac, a major of the guards, high in the favour of the monarch; and who, sincere and single-hearted, felt an utter abhorrence of every species of deceit, had for a considerable time been indignant to perceive that whenever the king was about to attend divine service, all the tribunes were crowded with ladies, who never made their appearance there, when it had been previously ascertained that His Majesty would not assist at the mass or vespers. On the latter occasions, under the pretext of being enabled to read their prayers, they each carried a

small taper, in order that they might be remarked and recognised; and, one evening, when the king was expected, and that the ladies and the body-guards were alike at their posts, the major appeared in front of the royal tribune, and flourishing his truncheon exclaimed in an official tone: "Guards, retire. Return to your quarters. The king will not attend the service."

The guards marched slowly from the chapel; a low murmur rose from the tribunes occupied by the court dames; the tapers were extinguished; and with the exception of two or three, all the fair bevy disappeared. Brisac had posted sergeants at the different doors of the chapel, with orders to cause the guards to return to their posts so soon as the ladies should have withdrawn to a sufficient distance; and they had no sooner done so than the troops resumed their station, and were speedily followed by the king himself; who, astonished at being for the first time confronted with empty benches, inquired at the close of the service the reason of so extraordinary an occurrence; when Brisac informed him of the test to which he had subjected the piety of the female portion of his court, and was rewarded by the hearty laughter of the monarch.

Meanwhile the influence of Madame de Maintenon steadily progressed, for it was based upon esteem devoid of passion; and the death of the queen had rendered Louis XIV. more than ever dependent upon her friendship.

We have already shown that the monarch had, in the first instance, evinced considerable repugnance to her person, and even combated the inclinations of Madame de Montespan when she proposed to make her the

gouvernante of her children; nor was it until he became convinced of her superior mental and moral qualifications, that he took a less prejudiced view of the subject. He found her affectionate and zealous towards her young charge; indefatigable in her care of their education, which she based upon the most solid principles; patient under the violence of her patroness, which she never sought to avenge; cautious and discreet in the selection of her friends; trustworthy under all circumstances, however trying; and attached to his interests, and anxious for his happiness, to an extent which rendered her bold enough to remonstrate whenever she saw him about to yield to any of the failings by which he was likely to sully the greatness of his reign; while religion ceased to be austere from her lips, for she talked to him of hope rather than of despair, and pointed his attention to the future rather than the past.

Her contemporaries, and even those who felt aggrieved by the position to which she had so unexpectedly attained, have one and all admitted the extreme power of her intellect, the delicacy of her perceptions, her conversational talents, her penetration into character, and the soundness of her judgment; and even were it otherwise, the letters which she has left behind her would sufficiently attest her claim to each and all of these qualities. Nor were her personal attractions less calculated to attract than those of her mind; or, doubtlessly, without their effect upon the feelings of the king, who was becoming palled by the meretricious charms of the court beauties. Their fondness for display contrasted advantageously with the stateliness of her more matured loveliness; while, in the calm and dignified deportment which she exhibited, he found a

welcome repose from the constant and wearisome pretensions of her self-constituted rivals.

The hopes which had been conceived, therefore, that the king would soon weary of so grave a companion, gradually faded; and it became the fashion to pay a court to Madame de Maintenon, as exaggerated as the contempt which had formerly been evinced towards her person; but the mistress of the robes only profited by these demonstrations to effect projects of benevolence which, single-handed, she could not have accomplished. Such, to quote one example of this fact, was the establishment of an office of charity at Versailles, in 1684, of which all the women of rank readily became members, in the hope of thereby gaining the favour of the sovereign, and of which she herself consented to assume the presidency; while, at the same time, she declined to accept the office of lady of honour, the first appointment at the court.

This self-abnegation provoked many and opposite comments; for while her friends attributed the refusal to a modesty which induced her to consider her position as already sufficiently exalted for her merits, her enemies alleged that she had other and higher views, with which any mere court-appointment was incompatible; and meanwhile it is probable that it simply arose from her disinclination to be constantly brought into contact with the dauphiness, of whose dislike she had already received many and mortifying proofs.[1]

At the period when Madame de Montespan founded the convent of St. Joseph, Madame de Maintenon had already collected, near the palace of Ruel, a number of

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

well-born young women of impoverished families, whom she caused to be educated in a manner at once suited to their high birth and their altered circumstances, by two elderly nuns of talent, experience, and noble blood, who, on the destruction of their community, had applied to her for protection. The existence of this little school, or community, was no sooner ascertained, than several families in reduced circumstances solicited for their daughters the benevolence of its founder; and Madame de Maintenon became convinced that the building which she had appropriated for their residence would no longer contain its inmates. A more extensive edifice was therefore purchased near Versailles; but as even this establishment soon proved inadequate to its purpose, the king, who ascertained that nearly all the pupils were the children of men by whom he had been faithfully served, considered that it would be expedient to extend the limits of Madame de Maintenon's benevolence, by founding a spacious and noble institution for the education of the daughters of his nobility.

In pursuance of this object he accordingly acquired a vast and venerable château, the property of M. Seguier, situated at the entrance of the village of St. Cyr, near Versailles; and having pulled down the original edifice, raised above its ruins the regal foundation which took its name from the adjoining hamlet; and which became, ere long, celebrated throughout Europe. The building itself was of extreme architectural simplicity, but admirably adapted to its purpose, and the gardens were at once extensive and magnificent.

The king, anxious to ascertain its probable cost, consulted M. de Louvois; and that minister, whose esti-

mates were always drawn up somewhat loosely, after directing the attention of the monarch to the fact that the community was to consist of four hundred persons, computed the outlay at five hundred thousand annual livres; while Madame de Maintenon, who had also made her calculation, estimated the expenses at only fifty thousand crowns; and, in this dilemma, Louis XIV. adopted a medium measure, and assigned a revenue of three hundred thousand livres to the establishment.

A short period of practical experience sufficed, however, to prove to Madame de Maintenon that even this princely income would not support an institution which became ere long so popular that every noble family in the kingdom was anxious to partake its benefits; and she consequently cast her eyes on the rich abbey of St. Denis, which was then vacant, and proposed it to the king as almost sufficient to provide for the maintenance of the new establishment. This proposition startled the monarch; there was no precedent for such an appropriation; but when he reflected that the monks of St. Denis were living under the direction of a prior, and never even saw their abbot, (who was generally a powerful noble, neither taking nor affecting any interest in the abbey,) he was induced to suppress it; and to consecrate its revenues to the establishment of St. Cyr.

The monks protested in vain: they were referred to Madame de Maintenon; who succeeded, if not in reconciling them to the transfer, at least in silencing their objections; and this was no sooner accomplished than the monarch caused a magnificent suite of apartments to be prepared for himself in the principal quadrangle, in

order that he might occasionally assist, alike at the studies and the recreations of the pupils.

In the first instance the education of the children was confided to the care of canonesses; but as these ladies took only annual vows, and were free to retire when the period of their religious engagement had terminated; and as, since the foundation of the seminary, several of their number had already availed themselves of the privilege, while there was reason to apprehend that the example would be followed by others, the Abbé de Fénélon, who was the declared enemy of these temporary and capricious vocations, suggested the expediency of introducing at St. Cyr the same fixed and immutable vows as in other religious houses; and of enforcing them without loss of time.

The poor canonesses were startled by the sentence, and many among them vehemently refused to submit to a fate which they had never contemplated; but the eloquent abbé was proof against both tears and representations. He impressed upon them, that the rivers which had flowed from the beginning of creation, had never presumed to arrest their currents, nor to deviate from their course—that the sun had never ventured to abandon its functions, nor to turn back upon its path of clouds—that wise kings never abdicated the thrones to which they had been called—and that God himself steadily pursued his mysterious and unwearied watch without rest or change of purpose, and thus indicated the duty of the creatures whom he had made. Suffice it that St. Cyr became a cloister, and that thenceforward Louis XIV. counted a new convent in his dominions.[1]

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

The position of Madame de Maintenon became daily more and more difficult. Regularly at three o'clock each day the king proceeded to her apartments; and there, reclining in an arm-chair near the fire, he passed two or three hours; sometimes watching the progress of her tapestry-work, and conversing with her on the events of the day, and at others, listening somewhat carelessly to Racine, who was summoned to read portions of the tragedies upon which he was engaged; at intervals inquiring of the more attentive Madame de Maintenon: "What is the opinion of your solidity on this production?" And thus summoned, the lady put forth all her powers to amuse a monarch who was rapidly becoming unamuseable.[1]

In truth, a weariness of existence was rapidly growing upon Louis XIV; he had outlived his loves, his griefs, and almost his ambition; all he wanted was repose; and this he found in the society of an accomplished, judicious, and unassuming woman, who although he occasionally transacted business in her presence with Louvois, never presumed to proffer an opinion, save when he appealed to her judgment; and even then tendered it with reluctance and reserve.

These facts were, however, unknown to the world; and Madame de Maintenon was far from obtaining in general opinion the credit merited by her blameless deportment. In vain had the king, upon more than one occasion, proposed to her a friendship still more intimate. She was proof against so equivocal an ambition, and reminded him of the miseries which former irregularities of this description had entailed not only

[1] Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

upon his favourites, but also upon himself; the domestic dissensions—the public reprobation—and above all, the remorse of conscience.

These arguments were as novel as they were startling to the self-worshipping monarch. He had so long been accustomed to see the dishonour, denounced by Madame de Maintenon with indignation, solicited as a favour beyond all price, that there can be no doubt her influence was increased by their utterance; but meanwhile her position was, as we have already remarked, one of extraordinary delicacy; while that of the king himself was not without embarrassment. Not even the death of the queen, which raised the dauphiness to the first rank at court, could induce that princess to emerge from her retirement; and her circle was gloomy and inhospitable, at a period when Louis XIV. required entertainment. His children were advancing in age, and required more vigilance than he had energy to exert, although his affection towards them was sincere and unwearied. His first illusions were dissipated, and he felt his moral isolation; while his ebbing vanity suffered acutely from the calm and resolute self-respect of Madame de Maintenon.

It was probably this irritation of feeling which induced him to lend a willing ear to the proposition of Père la Chaise and Madame de Maintenon herself, both of whom had been urged to the atrocity of which they thus became the responsible agents, by the influence of the Jesuits, (who had long looked with anger and impatience upon the increasing importance of the Calvinists in the southern provinces,) that he should hasten to revoke the Edict of Nantes; a step upon which he had,

however, long before decided, although he had hitherto deferred its execution.

On ascending the throne in 1643, Louis XIV. had confirmed the privileges of the Protestants, but subsequently all the restrictions to which they had been subjected under Louis XIII. were once more gradually put in force; nor was it long ere the new monarch carried his hostility towards the reformed religion to a height never attempted by his predecessor. In the first instance he had been wary in its exhibition, but this caution was ultimately laid aside, until his severity was exerted so unequivocally that it compelled the catastrophe which supervened.

Every device which could be suggested to enforce proselytism was eagerly adopted: favours of every description were lavished upon those whom fear or avarice had converted to Romanism; they were exempted from taxation, from guardianship, and from local contributions: were excused their debts, delivered from the coercion of paternal authority, and even permitted to marry without the consent of their Calvinist parents; while they were, moreover, advanced in the several professions to which they devoted their talents. Far different, however, was the fate of those who clung to their persecuted creed for conscience sake.

Even from the year 1630 they had been made the victims of new hardships and of new indignities, until they were altogether deprived of the common rights of citizenship. Their colleges were closed; their youth shut out from every chance of an honourable or useful career; their churches interdicted; their inheritances wrested from them; and, finally, their dead forbidden to

share the graves of their ancestors.[1] But they still lived; and even this privilege was now considered too great for the unfortunate Calvinists.

The aim of Madame de Maintenon, in urging the monarch to an act of such iniquitous barbarity as that of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, was, as she averred, the hope of proselytism: she forgot alike the blood and the tears which must inundate the soil of France; she did not pause to remember how much the proscribed reformers had already borne for the sake of their faith; nor to speculate upon the amount of suffering which they might still be willing to endure in its defence. She desired to purge the kingdom of what she considered to be a damnable heresy, and her bigotry closed the eyes of her mercy. Her fatal counsels admit of but one palliation: the idea was not her own; and she did but hasten a catastrophe which, as we have already stated, had long been contemplated by Louis XIV. himself.

As a proof of this fact, he had, in the year 1682, recalled the Abbé du Chayla from India; and had sent him to Mende, with the title of Archpriest, and Inspector of Missions in the Cevennes.

The history of this man is, from first to last, a frightful romance. The Abbé du Chayla was a younger son of the house of Langlade, who had, despite his predilection for a military life, found himself compelled to enter the church; but unable to support the monotony of the ecclesiastical profession in his own country, and eager alike for enterprise and excitement, had resolved on a missionary voyage to India; and arrived at Pondicherry precisely at the moment when the King of

[1] Histoire de France. *Anquetil.*

Siam had put to death, amid the most cruel tortures, several other missionaries whose zeal for proselytism had excited his displeasure; while simultaneously with these executions, an order had also been promulgated which forbade all French priests to penetrate into Chinese-India; and the Abbé du Chayla no sooner ascertained this fact than he resolved upon entering the interdicted territory.

Three months afterwards he was made a prisoner, and cited before the governor of Balkan, by whom he was summoned immediately to abjure his religion, or in his turn to suffer martyrdom. Undaunted by the terrible nature of his position the Abbé did not hesitate; but bending his knees in prayer, suffered himself to be passively led away by his executioners, and subjected to every species of torture of which the human frame is susceptible. Not even a groan escaped his lips; and at length, with mutilated hands, wounded body, and legs crushed by their heavy fetters, he fainted from excessive anguish, and was supposed to have expired. He was then lifted from the ground, and fastened by the wrists to a tree by the road side, where he was left as a warning to those who might be, like himself, disposed to brave the displeasure of the king.

At nightfall, a poor pariah released him from his bonds, dragged him to his miserable but hospitable hovel, and by perseverance restored him to existence. The French ambassador, informed of the fearful butchery to which he had been subjected, and unconscious that he still survived, demanded justice for this violence exerted on a subject of France; and the King of Siam, upon ascertaining that he had escaped with life, gladly re-

stored a mutilated but living being to the minister who had sought only to reclaim a corpse.

Such was the man whom Louis XIV, probably foreseeing the rebellion which would ensue in the southern provinces of France on the promulgation of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, despatched in an official capacity to the Cevennes; where the persecuted at once became the persecutor, and exercised barbarities hitherto unpractised in a Christian land.

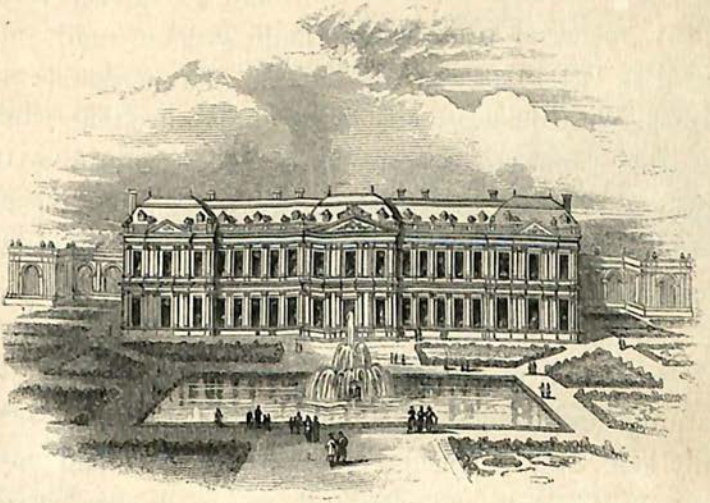
We have now before us a detailed account of the enormous and fiend-like inventions in which he combined the demoniacal ingenuity of Indian torture, with the scientific cruelties of semi-civilization; but we dare not do more than glance at the page on which they are enshrined like a monument of execration. Suffice it that even his most ardent panegyrists—for even this wretched man had his flatterers—and his firmest allies, never spoke of him without a feeling of dread and apprehension; while it is recorded of himself, that there were moments in which, as his own acts rose accusingly before his tortured conscience, he was seized with shuddering fits which forced him to his knees; where he frequently remained for hours together, with clasped hands, and so thoroughly mastered by his terror that big drops of agony started from his pale forehead, and rolled like a death-sweat over his haggard cheeks.

And he it was, who, aided by M. de Baville, the Intendant of Languedoc, and supported by M. de Broglie, was to enforce in the ill-fated south the execution of the fearful decree which Louis XIV. was about to put forth.

On the 18th of October, 1685, the king ultimately signed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had

already been presented to the council in the preceding April, and decided on in the following August; and it was when doing this that Louis XIV. added to the mottoes which he had already adopted that of *Lex una sub uno!*[1] There was no need to write it in blood at Versailles—the hand of death was to engrave it elsewhere.

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.



CHAPTER VI.

COURT-ANNOYANCES—RESISTANCE OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—HER INFLUENCE ON THE MANNERS OF THE COURT—LOUIS XIV. WEARIED OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—HER BANISHMENT DETERMINED—THE DUKE DE VIVONNE—THE BROTHER AND SISTER—THE DRIVE TO CLAGNY—INDIGNATION OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—THE PENSION—THE LETTRE-DE-CACHET—RETURN OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN TO VERSAILLES—INTERVIEW OF LOUIS XIV. AND MADAME DE MONTESPAN—EGOTISM OF THE MONARCH—INTEMPERANCE OF THE MARCHIONESS—APPEARANCE OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—MADAME DE MONTESPAN ON A SICK-BED—THREAT OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—THE DUKE DU MAINE—COURT-COUNCILLORS—INTERPOSITION OF THE DAUPHIN—THE UNSUCCESSFUL MISSION—THE COURT-PHYSICIAN—AN INDISCREET INFERENCE—MORTIFICATION OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—SUDDEN RESOLUTION OF LOUIS XIV.—THE SNOW-STORM—THE PRIMATE OF PARIS—THE BRIDAL PROCESSION—MARRIAGE OF LOUIS XIV. AND MADAME DE MAINTENON—DEPARTURE OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN FOR PETIT-BOURG—HER PRESENTATION TO THE WIFE OF LOUIS XIV.—THE TABOURET—THE DUKE DU MAINE—RETRIBUTION—FINAL DEPARTURE OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN FROM VERSAILLES.

Nor was the court itself destined to remain without its intestine warfare; for the king, more and more irritated by the resolute refusal of Madame de Maintenon to listen to the overtures which he still persisted in addressing to

her; and ill at ease as to the results of the fearful enterprise upon which he had entered; found his internal tranquillity menaced from within and without, and succeeded at last in persuading himself that he could not dispense with the possession of her entire affection; while incapable, from past experience, of believing in a virtue sufficient of itself to withstand temptation, he busied himself in endeavouring to discover the real cause of her opposition, when, as a natural consequence, his thoughts fastened upon Madame de Montespan.

It was easy to understand that a woman, however charming and attractive she might still be, must necessarily look with suspicion upon a rival who had once been all-powerful, and who still possessed over herself the advantage of comparative youth; and Louis XIV, with his usual egotism, no sooner imagined that he had discovered the real obstacle to his wishes, than he resolved to rid himself of a person who had become not only indifferent, but even obnoxious to him. It is true that she was the mother of the most promising of his children, but he had made those children princes; that she had consecrated to him the brightest years of her life, but in return he had enriched her to a degree which ensured not only the comfort, but even the luxury of those which were to supervene; that he had sullied her name with infamy, but it was an infamy which she had worn like a regal robe, and cinctured about her brows as proudly as a diadem; consequently, according to his kingly calculation, they stood upon equal ground.

Moreover, the temper of the marchioness had become soured by the desertion of the monarch; and, as she was utterly destitute of the real dignity which would have

prompted her to endure the change in silence, she had not hesitated to overwhelm him with reproaches, which were couched in no measured or courteous terms. She taunted him with his moral and natural defects: upbraided him with the sacrifices which she had made for his sake; sneered at the want of self-control which had rendered him, in the decline of life, the slave of a mere vain and mindless girl; and ridiculed without mercy the mature graces of his chosen friend.

All this was gall and bitterness to a monarch like Louis XIV, who had from his earliest years compelled the respect of those about him, and been for a time worshipped as something more than mortal; and, consequently, urged on the one hand by his growing attachment to Madame de Maintenon, and on the other by his desire to liberate himself from the thrall of an out-worn passion, he determined, could he not otherwise secure the possession of his new favourite, to exact the disparition of Madame de Montespan from the court.

Nothing could be more easy than to form such a resolution, but its execution involved infinitely more difficulty. The timid la Vallière, the proud Mary de Mancini, and the virtuous Mademoiselle d'Houdancourt, had each in her turn yielded without expostulation; but no such calm concession could be anticipated from the fiery and sarcastic marchioness, who pointed haughtily to her children, and spoke loudly of her claims upon the gratitude of the king. It was, therefore, by no means wonderful that Louis XIV. should shrink from personally communicating his pleasure to the condemned favourite; and, ere he proceeded to so extreme a measure as her banishment, resolve to have a final explanation with

Madame de Maintenon, whose influence not only over himself individually, but also over the manners, and even, to all appearance, the morals of his court, had already produced the most striking effects.

Libertine exploits were no longer a theme of public conversation in the presence of women, and were only whispered with precaution among the young nobles themselves to relieve the tedium of a long detention in the royal antechambers; while religious subjects were openly discussed in the presence of the sovereign. The dresses of the court-ladies had become more matronly in their fashion, the use of rouge was partially abandoned, and a certain staid gravity had succeeded to the coquetish bearing of the courtiers of both sexes. Balls became rare, and theatres remained empty, while every metropolitan church which boasted an eloquent preacher was filled to overflowing; and instead of the Opera, the last intrigue, and the gaming-table, the highborn and the beautiful alike discoursed of Rome, indulgences, and the religious jubilee. The priesthood were rapidly becoming all-powerful; while the monarch, more and more dependent for his hourly comfort upon the tranquil pleasures, and unceasing attentions for which he was indebted to Madame de Maintenon, felt the utter impossibility of leaving her free to abandon him, should her confessor urge her to such a step; or, on his own part, to retain her near him in so indifferent a character as that of his friend.

Under this impression he therefore made a last effort to overcome her scruples; but he submitted vainly to this condescension. Madame de Maintenon remained firm; and even threatened to abandon the court should

the king again repeat his solicitations. More than ever convinced by so resolute an opposition, (jarring as it did with all his previous experience of the sex,) that nothing save jealousy could have enabled her so resolutely to maintain her purpose, Louis had no sooner asked and obtained the pardon of his error, than, convinced that by such a measure he should ultimately ensure success where he had now so signally failed, he informed her of his desire that she should become the messenger of his displeasure to the offending favourite.[1]

Like himself, however, she shrank from such contact with Madame de Montespan; and after having with great reluctance consented to become an actor in so disagreeable a drama, she sent to request the presence of the Marquis de Vivonne, the brother of the marchioness; a man of prudence and honour, upon whose judgment and good faith she felt that she could rely.

At the close of their interview the marquis drove at once to the apartments of his sister, whom he found languid, discontented, and irritable. Nothing daunted, however, by the unpromising nature of her mood, he proposed to her that she should share his carriage and accompany him to Clagny, alleging that the pure air and exercise would tend to restore the tone of her nerves. To this proposal Madame de Montespan listlessly consented: to her at that moment any companionship was preferable to her own thoughts; and the brother and sister were in a few minutes beyond the boundaries of Versailles.

They had no sooner arrived at their destination than the marquis prepared to fulfil his mission; which he did

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

in the most gentle terms; commenting upon the failing health and fading looks of the marchioness, and counselling her at once to abdicate all her pretensions to the favour of the king, and to retire to one of her estates.

Madame de Montespan answered only by a burst of passion; but M. de Vivonne was not discouraged. He reminded her that the monarch, although he had never distinctly commanded her retirement, had more than once hinted to her his wish that she should withdraw from the court, with the dignity befitting the mother of his children; he forced upon her the fact that her influence had long ceased; and that it was not probable, after having failed to maintain her supremacy over so pitiful a rival as Mademoiselle de Fontanges, that she could hope to cope with so powerful an antagonist as Madame de Maintenon; he urged upon her the respect which she owed to herself, and the sacrifice which was due to the exalted position of her children; and finally he recalled to her memory the daily increasing piety of the monarch, which caused him to look with bitter compunction upon the effects of a weakness that had led him to a two-fold violation of the marriage tie; and drawn down upon him the censures of the church.

Madame de Montespan threw herself back among the cushions of her chair, and waved her hand disdainfully. She was, however, startled from her haughty attitude by his demanding whether the anonymous letters which she had from time to time received, had not sufficiently served to intimate the pleasure of the king? and whether after such direct and unequivocal warnings, she was still resolved to expose herself to the indignity of being dismissed from a court whence she must feel assured that her

absence was resolved upon, while she had yet time to retire with honour?

At the mention of these letters the eyes of Madame de Montespan blazed with fury. She had, indeed, received such; but believing that they were the mere productions of individual malice, and, consequently, a secret between herself and the writer, she had committed them to the flames, and dismissed the circumstance from her memory. Now, however, she learnt that this was far from being the case; and with an ill-concealed tremor in her voice, she inquired if she were to understand that the letters to which he alluded were addressed to her by His Majesty?

The answer did not tend to re-assure her; they had been written by the Marquis de Chamarante under the king's dictation; and were intended to open her eyes to the real nature of her position, and to enable her to retire with credit from a scene where her presence had become importunate. Now, however, the marquis proceeded to declare, she had no longer the privilege of deliberation; for he was commissioned to inform her, that if she did not immediately avail herself of the permission accorded to her through himself, to depart upon the instant from Versailles, she would be formally expelled by a *lettre de cachet.*

Madame de Montespan started from her seat. This was an indignity of which she had never dreamed; and she was passionately pouring forth expressions of incredulity and defiance, when the marquis calmly bade her, instead of wasting moments which had now become precious, in idle invective, rather to summon her household to Clagny, and to set forth on the morrow either

for his own château of Boissy, or for her palace at Petit-Bourg; where, on the following day, he would explain the precise circumstances of her position.

Madame de Montespan insisted, however, upon being fully informed on the instant; and then learnt that the king had resolved upon her final retirement; and that he had already settled upon her an annual pension of six hundred thousand livres,[1] in order that she might be enabled to support the state required for the mother of his children.

Madame de Montespan buried her face in her hands; and remained for a considerable time lost in thought; and when she at length looked up, her lips were pale, and her voice trembled. She had not shed a tear, but her breast heaved, and she had evidently come to a decision. Folding her shawl about her, she requested the marquis immediately to drive her back to Versailles, it being necessary, as she asserted, that she should collect her money, her jewels, and her papers; after which she declared that she was ready, for the sake of her family, to follow his advice. M. de Vivonne, never doubting the sincerity of her words, at once complied with the request; and having conducted her to her apartments on their arrival at the palace, hastened to inform Madame de Maintenon of the success of his mission.

But the solitude of the banished favourite was not destined long to remain uninvaded; scarcely twenty minutes had elapsed when the door of her apartment opened, and Louis XIV. himself entered unannounced.

Nothing could be more characteristic of the two per-

[1] Equal in value to 2,400,000 livres of the present day.

sonages than the scene which ensued. Never were the self-satisfied and mean egotism of the monarch, or the intemperate violence of his old favourite, more fully demonstrated than in this interview. The king entered the apartment with all the tranquillity induced by the conviction that he was about to be disembarrassed of an importunate individual who had long ceased to be necessary to his happiness; and the marchioness watched his approach, with all the forced placidity of one who scorned to let him see the extent of her mortification; but who was not, nevertheless, sufficiently mistress of her temper to control the passion that was gathering like a storm-cloud in the depths of her spirit.

There was, indeed, almost a smile upon the lip of the monarch as he advanced; and, feigning not to remark the difficulty with which she suppressed the feelings that were raging in her bosom, accosted her in a tone of careless courtesy, congratulating her upon the decision to which she had come, and of which he had already been apprised by M. de Vivonne, and assuring her that it was one which would be applauded by all the world. Thence he digressed to the period of their first attachment; and begged her to remember that eighteen years[1] had since elapsed; and that they were mutually indebted for its long duration simply to the circumstance that it had been alimented by the difficulties consequent upon their previous position. He spoke of their children, as of his own personal property; expatiated upon what he had already done, and what he still purposed to do in their behalf; and called her attention to the fact, that, in the act by which they were recognised in parliament, her name had

[1] It began in 1667. The marchioness was born in 1647.

not appeared as their mother, in consequence of her *previous ties* having rendered such a measure impossible; but assured her that, so long as he lived, they should never be suffered to forget to whom they owed their existence. He next proceeded to declare that he was well aware that the most troubled years of his life, and of his reign, had been embellished by her wit and the charm of her society, and that he should ever retain this recollection; feeling that, although separated in fact, he should still be united in thought with a person who would always be remembered by himself as the mother of children very dear to him.

Crushed deeper and deeper by these accumulated insults Madame de Montespan attempted no reply, but suffered the king to exhaust all his eloquence, ere she interrupted his harangue; while, satisfied by the mute attention with which she listened, and never doubting that by his condescension he should be enabled to separate from her without the scandal which he had hitherto apprehended, he further proceeded to remind her that he had from time to time so greatly increased her fortune, that he believed it, at that moment, to be considerable; but that, nevertheless, he was prepared still more to augment its amount; and that, should the pension which had been announced to her by M. de Vivonne appear inadequate, he was willing, at her request, to increase it. That her children had become princes; who must, as a natural consequence, reside at the court, but that she might be permitted to see them frequently, as he would give an order to that effect; and, finally, that he would advise her to adopt the initiative, and to write to her husband; not to request him to annul and revoke the

judicial and legal separation which existed between them, but to inform him that she had become rational, and had at length resolved to reinstate herself in public opinion.

It was perhaps fortunate, that at this moment the children of the marchioness, who had been summoned by the king to take leave of their mother, who was, as they were informed, about to *set out on a journey*, were conducted to her apartment; for, in all probability, it softened in some degree the asperity of the wounded and exasperated woman, whose pride and feelings had alike been lacerated by this lengthy and cold-blooded address.

Certain it is, that, after a short interval, during which Louis XIV. made no attempt to continue his harangue, she controlled herself sufficiently to remark, with a portion of her constitutional haughtiness, that she was lost in astonishment at the indifference with which a monarch, whose magnanimity had been vaunted by the world, and credited by himself, could throw from him a woman who had sacrificed everything to his will. She then reminded him, in her turn, that from the period in which he had become estranged from her, she had never suffered herself to overstep the boundary of respect due to one who, in ceasing to remain her lover, had once more become her sovereign; but that she had submitted herself to his pleasure, if not without remonstrance, at least without public expostulation; and she finally demanded to know for what reason an estrangement, which had already been supported by herself with patience for the space of two years, was to be rendered more conspicuous until the period when her two younger children would no longer require her care.

Louis XIV. started in alarm, as he inquired whether

she had already altered her resolution, and was about to falsify the promise which she had made to her brother?

The reply was uttered with an expression of scorn that left no doubt of its sincerity. Far from seeking to retain her present worse than equivocal position, the marchioness declared that she should absent herself with delight from scenes that to her had become hateful, by the perfidy and treachery with which she was compelled to associate them; and that she would gladly consent never again to approach the person of the king, on condition that the odious woman who had succeeded in supplanting her unsuspicious benefactress, should share her exile.

"The kings of Europe;" replied the monarch, pale with agitation and anger; "have never yet ventured to dictate laws in my palace; nor shall you, Madam, subject me to yours. The person whom I have for too long a period suffered you to offend and mortify, possesses ancestors as noble as your own; and if you did, indeed, open to her the gates of the palace, you, by so doing, introduced there goodness, gentleness, talent, and virtue. Be your vindictiveness as bitter as it may, this enemy whom you have slandered wherever you could find listeners, and who has upon every occasion endeavoured to excuse and justify you, will remain near that throne which was defended by her fathers, and which is even now strengthened by her own wise counsels. In seeking to remove you from a court where your presence and your pretensions have long been alike misplaced, I wished to save you the knowledge, and, from kind feeling, to spare you the evidence, of *an event* calculated to irritate your nature, which everything tends to

exasperate; but stay here, Madam, stay here, since you love great catastrophes, and are amused by them; the day after to-morrow you will be, more than ever, a *supernumerary* in the palace."

There was no possibility of mistaking such an announcement; and Madame de Montespan at once felt that it implied the complete and public triumph of her rival, though she was yet far from foreseeing the extent of that triumph. She had, however, heard more than enough, and she fell senseless to the ground.

Her women, summoned by the king, who looked on rather with impatience than sympathy, soon succeeded in restoring her to consciousness; while the first words which fell upon her ear were those of Louis, who remarked to her steward: "All this wearies me beyond endurance. She must leave the palace this very day."

"Yes, I will leave it!" exclaimed the exasperated woman, springing from the arms of her attendants, seizing a desert-knife which lay on a bureau, and thence rushing upon the little Count de Toulouse, whom his father held by the hand: "I will leave it—but first—"

At this moment of delirium, a lateral door was suddenly opened; and Madame de Maintenon, who had probably apprehended some scene of a similar description, made one bound towards the wretched woman, and in the next moment had torn both the weapon and the affrighted child from her grasp; her face was bathed in tears; and as she appeared, the king tottered to the chimney-piece, buried his eyes in his hands, and wept profusely.

The children were removed by the attendants; and they were no sooner in safety than Madame de Main-

tenon, who had received a slight wound in wrenching the knife from the clasp of the unhappy mother, busied herself in binding her hand in her handkerchief, while her rival exclaimed passionately; "Ah, madam, had I believed what the king told me fourteen years ago, my life would not have been in your power to-day." Madame de Maintenon started, and forced a faint smile; after which she clasped the hand of the marchioness with a look of sympathy, and quitted the apartment.

As the king saw her disappear, he aroused himself from the paroxysm of emotion by which he had been momentarily overcome, and slowly followed her example; nor could the supplications of the wretched marchioness induce him to delay his departure. "I entreated him in vain;" she says, with a heart-brokenness which for a moment causes us to forget her frailty; "he did not return!"[1]

A violent fever was the result of this interview to the discarded favourite, who was thereby prevented from leaving the palace; but it induced no change in the arrangements which had been previously made.

For a considerable time the king had complained to his confessor of the resistance of Madame de Maintenon, and had more than hinted his desire that the reverend Jesuit would exert his influence over the mind of his penitent, and induce her to submit to his wishes; but he had been considerably startled when, on one of these occasions, Père la Chaise ventured to suggest that a private marriage would at once satisfy the scruples of the lady, and those of his own conscience.

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan

Louis XIV. hesitated; and while he remained irresolute, Madame de Maintenon, in reply to the passionate reproaches with which he again ventured to assail her, declared that the conflict she was compelled to sustain between her heart and her inclinations was already so great, that she could no longer expose herself to a temptation to which she was resolved never to yield, but which was nevertheless undermining her health, and ruining her peace; and that she had consequently resolved upon following the example of la Vallière, and dedicating the remainder of her life to the cloister; where she would spend it in combating a passion to which she felt that it would be a sin to succumb, and in prayers for him by whom it had been inspired.

This declaration affected Louis to a degree which almost deprived him of his reason, and he was still suffering from its first effects when the Duke du Maine rushed into his apartment; and flinging himself at his feet, implored him not to sanction the departure of one who had really been his mother, and whom he loved with an intensity which involved all his earthly happiness.

Louis required little persuasion, for his own wishes coincided with those of his son, but the dread of ridicule still restrained him; and refusing to reply to the passionate entreaties of the duke, or to the reasoning of his confessor, whom he knew to be devoted to the interests of Madame de Maintenon, he resolved to consult Bossuet ere he finally compromised his word. When, however, Bossuet also pronounced his fiat in favour of the marriage; and represented to the king the disastrous effects which must inevitably accrue, alike to his reputation and to his eternal welfare, from a new connexion similar to

those by which the past years of his life had been too often sullied; combined with the obligations due to Madame de Maintenon for her refusal to plunge him once more into the same career of error: the monarch declared himself convinced, and authorized the bishop to announce to her the offer of his hand.

Upon this occasion the dauphin for the first time laid aside his apathy, and asserted himself as became the son of a great monarch. He no sooner ascertained the fact of the intended marriage, than he hastened from Meudon to Versailles, and presenting himself in the royal chamber at an hour when the king was not accustomed to admit any one to his presence, he commenced his expostulations as a respectful child, and terminated them as the heir to the throne; while unused as was Louis XIV. to any opposition to his will, the arguments of the young prince were so powerful, and involved such high interests, that he consented to take further advice ere he carried his intention into effect. The difficulty was, however, whom to consult; and as the monarch urged this fact with some querulousness, the dauphin suggested that he should demand the opinions of the Abbé Fénélon, and Louvois; two men of whose zeal and loyalty he had in numerous circumstances had ample proof, and who differed alike in profession and feeling.

This suggestion was followed, and both Fénélon and Louvois protested against a marriage by which the personal dignity of the monarch, and the interests of the nation, must alike be compromised; when the dauphin, proud of the influence which he had for the first time exerted over the mind of his father, and satisfied with the promise he received from his own lips that the

marriage should not take place, returned to Meudon, where he passed a fortnight in the happy conviction that it had been a mere caprice, which had terminated as idly as it had commenced; while the abbé and the minister alike congratulated themselves on the happy result of their arguments; the first little suspecting that his court-favour was thenceforth at an end; or the second, if the evidence of St. Simon be worthy of credence, that his ill-omened interference on that occasion would ultimately cost him his life.

The first doubt of his entire success which was forced upon the mind of the dauphin, was, however, engendered by a proposal officially made to him, that if he would consent to withdraw his opposition to the projected marriage, an illegitimate daughter, to whom he was fondly attached, should be immediately legitimated; but even this voluntary concession failed to produce any effect upon the mind of the prince.

"Return to those who entrusted you with this humiliating compromise;" he said proudly; "and tell them that I do, and always shall, regard them as the most implacable enemies of France, and of the glory of her monarch. If I am ever unfortunate enough to become their master, I swear to you that I will give them cause to repent their audacity in striving to make me favourable to their plot, by offering to legitimize my daughter; and if the affection which I bear her were capable of inducing me to such an act of madness, I would pray to God on my bended knees at this very moment to deprive me of her, rather than suffer me to sanction so glaring an impropriety. Leave the room, and never again venture into my presence."

The resolute opposition of the dauphin appeared to render all further idea of the marriage impossible, when a slight indisposition, by which Madame de Maintenon was for a few days confined to her bed, and an incident consequent upon that indisposition, determined Louis XIV. to conclude it without further reference either to his family or his ministers.

It chanced that Daquin, the physician of the lady, entered the apartment during one of the frequent visits of the king; and being desired to act as though he were not present, proceeded to question his patient upon the several symptoms of her ailment; after which he inquired if he were not correct in assuming that she was likely to become a mother?

Nothing could exceed the indignation of Madame de Maintenon at such an inquiry. "Begone, sir!" she cried angrily, as she raised herself upon her elbow; "begone instantly; and never let me see your face again in my apartment!"

"Nor at my court"—added the equally offended monarch.

"Such, sir;" murmured the invalid, as the bewildered and mortified physician disappeared, and she herself fell back upon her pillow, veiling her burning cheek with her hand; "Such is the result of my error. Innocent as I may be in my own eyes, the world does not acquit me; and I had no right to visit its mistake upon that incautious man; he merely judged of me by report—and that report condemned me."

"It shall do so no longer," said the king, firmly, as he rose, and left the room.

A deep snow was falling; and the wind which drove

it heavily against the casements of the archepiscopal palace was roaring in the wide chimney, and detaching a few slates from the ancient roof of the cathedral, when a loud knocking at the entrance gate of the primate's residence suddenly echoed through the vast apartment, in which he was just listlessly concluding a game at chess with his almoner, and at intervals pitying the fate of the unfortunate wayfarers who were exposed to the inclement weather. In a few instants the door of the room opened, and a court messenger respectfully presented a sealed packet, which M. de Paris hastily opened; and having perused the contents, he dismissed the courier with the simple words; "That is sufficient;" upon which the functionary withdrew, and as he closed the door behind him, the primate turned to the almoner, and said quietly, "Prepare, sir, if you please, a green vestment; mark the missal at the article *de matrimoniis;* put everything necessary into a carriage, get into it yourself, and wait for me."

The clock of the cathedral struck eleven as the carriage left the portal of the archepiscopal palace; and at half-past twelve M. de Harlay and his almoner reached the grate of the château of Versailles; where Bontems was awaiting them; who had no sooner convinced himself of the identity of the visitors, than he conducted them across the marble court to the private closet of the king, where they found Madame de Maintenon in full dress, with Louis XIV. standing beside her, while a few paces apart stood the Marquis de Montchevreuil and Père la Chaise.

As the eye of the king rested upon the archbishop he exclaimed; "Let us go;" and taking the

hand of the lady, he led her forward through the long suite of rooms, followed by the other actors in this extraordinary scene, who moved on in profound silence, thrown for an instant into broad light by the torch carried by Bontems, and then suddenly lost in the deep darkness beyond its influence. Nothing was to be heard as the bridal party proceeded, save the muffled sound of their footsteps, deadened by the costly carpets over which they trod; but it was remarked that, as the light flashed for an instant across the portraits of his family which clothed the walls, Louis XIV. glanced eagerly and somewhat nervously upon them, as though he dreaded the rebuke of some stern eye, or haughty lip, for the weakness of which he was about to become guilty.

And that some such feeling of morbid apprehension had indeed fastened upon his imagination was made manifest by the fact, that, upon entering the old chapel, which had been lighted up for the ceremony, the king gazed earnestly for an instant upon the last portrait that had been suspended there, and which was that of Maria Theresa; and Bontems, who chanced to be at his elbow, overheard him murmur to himself: "Have I seen aright? She seemed to look angrily upon me."[1]

The individuals collected about the altar were Père la Chaise, the Archbishop of Paris, the Marquis and Marchioness de Montchevreuil, Louvois, the Marquis de Chamarante, Bontems, valet-de-chambre to the king, and Mademoiselle Nanon, the favourite attendant of Madame de Maintenon.

According to St. Simon, Louvois had only consented to

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

W. Greatbatch, sc

LOUIS XIV

FROM A RARE PRINT BY VERMEULEN AFTER GEUSLIN

London Richard Bentley 1847

be present on the express condition that the marriage should never be publicly declared; but be this as it may, he acted conjointly with M. de Montchevreuil as its official witness. A temporary altar had been erected in the king's cabinet; and he no sooner entered leading Madame de Maintenon by the hand, and knelt down beside her, than Père la Chaise celebrated the mass, while the Archbishop of Paris presented the marriage rings, and finally pronounced the benediction; after which the nuptial party departed for the château de Maintenon.

On the morrow all Versailles and the capital rang with the astounding news—Louis XIV. had become the husband of the widow Scarron!

On her return to the palace Madame de Maintenon took possession of a magnificent suite of apartments which had been expressly prepared for her; and although she retained her liveries, she thenceforward appeared only in the carriage of the king, where she occupied the seat formerly sacred to the queen. In private, she received the honours due to royalty, and was addressed as "Your Majesty;" while the monarch, whenever he had occasion to mention her, designated her simply, *Madame*.

It is singular that Madame de Montespan, even hating her as she did, should assert that although the king was anxious to declare their marriage, Madame de Maintenon constantly refused to permit it; "and by this wise and prudent conduct reconciled in time even those who had been the most hostile to the measure;"[1] while St. Simon asserts on the contrary, that she was greatly disappointed in her hope of entire recognition as Queen of France;

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

and affords such detail of the fact that we are compelled to yield belief to his statement.

A few days after this quasi-royal marriage, Madame de Montespan having partially recovered her health removed to her residence at Petit-Bourg; where she was immediately assailed by the whole of her family, who hastened to impress upon her the necessity of losing no more time in paying her respects to Madame de Maintenon as the wife of the monarch; if not for her own sake, at least for theirs, who must inevitably be compromised by any mark of disrespect on her part. Repugnant as was such a humiliation to her natural haughtiness, as well as to her outraged feelings, she was unable to contend against their united representations, and at length consented to gratify their wishes; in pursuance of which she appeared for the last time at the palace of Versailles, in a gorgeous robe of gold and silver tissue, looped with jewels.

As she entered the apartment, the king, who was seated near a table, rose for an instant, and bowed graciously, after which he reseated himself; while she made the three curtseys, with a pause between each, which were at that period customary at every court presentation; and thus gradually approached Madame de Maintenon, who occupied a large arm-chair covered with rich brocade. She did not rise, both etiquette and the presence of the king rendering such a condescension impossible; but she flushed perceptibly, as she motioned her visitor to a *tabouret* which stood near her, and began to speak to her of Petit-Bourg, of her health, and of her children; remarking with a smile that she would confide a secret to her; which was no less than that the Prince

de Condé had already asked the hand of Mademoiselle de Nantes for the Duke de Bourbon his grandson, and had promised that of his grand-daughter to the Duke du Maine; and that in two or three years they should see these desirable marriages accomplished.

This perhaps well-intentioned confidence did not tend to reconcile Madame de Montespan to the part which she was then playing. With all her faults, she had been tenderly attached to her children, and she now learned their future destiny from a stranger. The *tabouret* had only wounded her pride; the sense forced upon her of her utter isolation and bereavement, drove the iron into her heart; and after a few more painful efforts at composure, she rose from her incommodious seat, and with a repetition of stately reverences withdrew from this scene of mental suffering.

As she passed through the saloons which separated the reception-room of Madame de Maintenon from the grand staircase, she found them crowded with courtiers, all of whom were known to her, but by few of whom she was apparently recognised; and hastening to her own apartments, of which she still retained the keys, she threw herself upon a sofa, and sent to summon the Duke du Maine; for her woman-heart was at length completely crushed, and she longed to listen for a moment to the voice of affection and sympathy.

But her hour of retribution was come; Louis Auguste de Bourbon saw in the soul-stricken woman before him, not the mother whom he was bound to honour, but the discarded favourite whose intimacy could induce neither profit nor advantage; and she felt that it was so as he approached her without one sign of emotion, coldly

remarking; "I am glad to see you again; we were about to write."

The cup was full. The marchioness released her son from his attendance; turned a long look on the magnificence which she was about to abandon for ever; and summoned her carriage, from whose window she saw the king, as she traversed the marble court, standing in a balcony to watch her departure.[1]

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF LOUIS XIV.—EXCLAMATION OF MADAME DE MAINTENON.

We have already alluded to the stringent and uninterrupted etiquette established by Louis XIV. at Versailles; but we feel that we should not fulfil our duty as faithful chroniclers of the French court in the seventeenth century, did we not present to our readers the detail of a day's observances, and by so doing enable them to appreciate the monotonous and trivial restraints imposed upon himself and all about him by the vanity of the "Great Monarch."

At eight o'clock in the morning, while one of the officers of the oven renewed the wood in the chamber of the king, the under-valets softly opened the shutters, carried away the collation,[1] the mortar,[2] and the taper[3]

[1] The collation, or *in-case*, was a repast prepared *in case* the king should require refreshment during the night. It generally consisted of a bowl of soup, a cold roasted chicken, bread, wine, and water; and an enamelled drinking-cup.

[2] The *mortar* was a small silver vessel which owed its name to its peculiar form; and which was filled with water, on whose surface floated a mould of yellow wax, weighing half a pound, with a cotton wick in the centre.

[3] The taper, which was also left alight throughout the night, was placed in a silver candlestick, standing upon the floor in a basin of the same metal.

which had been burning throughout the night, and removed the watch-bed.[1] The first valet de chambre, who had meanwhile dressed himself in an anteroom, then entered, and remained silently beside the royal couch until the hands of the timepiece pointed to the half-hour; when he awoke the monarch, and immediately passed into the waiting-room to announce that he no longer slept. An attendant thereupon opened the two battants of the door, when the dauphin and his sons, *Monsieur*, and the Duke de Chartres, who awaited this signal, entered to inquire how the king had passed the night. They were followed, after the interval of a moment, by the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, the first lord of the bed-chamber, and the grand-master of the robes; and these were succeeded by the first valet of the wardrobe, followed by several officers bearing the royal vestments. Fagon, the first physician, and Telier, the head surgeon, had also the privilege of the *entrée* by virtue of their office.

Bontems[2] then poured into the hands of the king a few drops of spirits of wine, holding beneath them a plate of enamelled silver; and the first lord of the bed-chamber presented the holy water, with which the monarch made the sign of the cross upon his brow and breast. This done, the dauphin and the Duke du Maine approached the bed, to inquire how His Majesty had slept; and the king, as he replied, asked in his turn of the latter after the health of Madame de Maintenon; then, still in his bed, he recited the short office of the Holy Ghost; which was no sooner terminated than M. de St. Quentin

[1] The watch-bed was occupied by the head valet de chambre.

[2] Head-valet de chambre.

displayed a collection of wigs, from which Louis XIV. selected that which he intended to wear. When he at length rose, the first lord of the bed-chamber put on his dressing-gown, which was always composed of some rich material; Quentin presented the wig, which Louis adjusted with his own hands; and Bontems drew on his stockings, and placed near him his slippers of embroidered velvet. The king had no sooner thrust his feet into these, than he again crossed himself with the holy water, emerged from behind the balustrade which enclosed the bed, and seated himself in another large arm-chair which was placed beside the fireplace; when he demanded the *First Entrée*.[1]

The principal lord of the bed-chamber immediately repeated in a loud voice, "*The first entrée;*" and an attendant stationed near the door then admitted those who were privileged to assist at the *petit lever*.[2]

[1] Until the year 1789 this name was given to the familiar receptions which took place daily in the apartments of the principal members of the royal family of France. There were three descriptions of *entrée;* the familiar *entrée* took place when the king awoke; and was accorded only to princes of the blood, and occasionally to certain great nobles. Foreign princes, ambassadors, dukes and peers, Spanish grandees, &c. were admitted to the great or little *entrées*, which differed only in the hours at which they were held. The great officers of the crown and of the king's household were also privileged to be present. There was, moreover, the *entrée* of the cabinet, open to the great almoner, the king's equerries, the captains of the body-guard, the Swiss guards, the gendarmes, and all the ministers without distinction. The *entrées* were conducted with the same ceremony at the courts of the dauphin, the queen, and the princes and princesses of the blood.

[2] This term signified the less formal reception accorded to the more especial favourites of the monarch; and involved less ceremony than the *grand lever* by which it was succeeded.

The king only shaved every second day; on which occasions, while an attendant prepared the water, and held the bason, Quentin removed the royal beard, and afterwards washed the parts upon which he had operated with a soft sponge saturated with spirits of wine and water. The king wiped his face himself, while Bontems held the looking-glass.

At the moment in which the master of the robes approached to dress him, the king demanded his chamber, or *Grande Entrée;* upon which three of his principal attendants took up their position at the entrance of the apartment, attended by several valets de chambre and door-keepers of the cabinet; admission to the *grand lever* being a signal favour for which even princes occasionally sighed for a considerable time in vain; while the greatest precaution was observed to prevent the intrusion of any unprivileged person. Thus as each individual presented himself, his name was whispered to the first lord of the bed-chamber, who repeated it to the king. When the monarch made no reply, the visitor was admitted, and the duke walked back to his station near the fire-place, whence he marshalled the new-comers to their several places, in order to prevent their pressing too closely about His Majesty. Princes and governors, marshals and peers, were alike subjected to this tedious and somewhat humiliating ceremony, from which three individuals alone were exempted; and these three were Racine, Boileau, and Mansard; who, on their arrival at the guarded door, simply scratched against the panel, when the huissier threw back the battant, and they stood in the presence of the monarch.

Meanwhile, the king was occupied in dressing himself.

A valet of the wardrobe delivered to a gentleman of the chamber the socks and garters, which he, in his turn, presented to the monarch, who drew on the former himself; a second then handed the *haut-de-chausses*, to which his silk stockings were attached; and a third put on his shoes, and clasped their diamond buckles. Two pages, habited in crimson velvet, overlaid with gold and silver lace, then removed the slippers, while the king adjusted his garters, which were also buckled with diamonds.[1]

The royal breakfast succeeded. Two officers of the buttery entered, one carrying a loaf on an enamelled salver, and the other a folded napkin, between two plates of the like description; while at the same time the royal cup-bearer presented to the first lord a vase of gold-enamel, into which he poured a small quantity of wine and water, which was tasted by a second cup-bearer; the vase was then rinsed, and offered to the king upon a gold saucer; and he had no sooner drank, than the dauphin, giving his hat and gloves to the first lord in waiting, took the napkin, and presented it to the monarch to wipe his lips.

When he had finished his frugal repast, Louis XIV. threw off his dressing-gown; and while one of the higher attendants withdrew his night-shirt by the left sleeve, Bontems held the other. The latter then received from the hands of the monarch the reliquary which he wore about his neck, and transferred it to one

[1] Although the king, without an absolute disregard of etiquette, was at liberty to put on his garters with his own hands, he was not free to take them off at night; and, while it was the admitted privilege of the head valet de chambre to unclasp that of the right leg, an inferior attendant was permitted to remove the other.

of his subordinates, who carried it to the king's closet, where he remained to guard it. The royal shirt, which had meanwhile been warmed, was then given to the first lord; and the dauphin, once more disembarrassing himself of his hat and gloves, approached and presented it to the king. A marquis then assisted in the arrangement of the *haut-de-chausses*, and a duke adjusted the inner waistcoat.

Two valets of the wardrobe next brought forward the royal sword, the vest, and the blue ribbon; when some man of high rank buckled on the sword, assisted in putting on the vest, and flung over it a scarf with the ribbon to which were attached the cross of the Holy Ghost in diamonds, and the cross of St. Louis tied with red. The king then drew on his under coat, with the assistance of the grand-master of the robes; adjusted his cravat of rich lace, which was folded round his neck by a favourite courtier; and, finally, emptied into the pockets of the loose outer coat, which was presented to him for that purpose, the contents of those which he had worn on the previous day. He then received two handkerchiefs of costly point from another attendant, by whom they were carried on an enamelled saucer of an oval shape, called *salve;* and his toilette once completed, Louis XIV. returned to the *ruelle* of his bed, where he knelt down upon two cushions, already prepared for him, and said his prayers; all the bishops and cardinals entering within the balustrade in his suite, and reciting their devotional exercises in a suppressed voice.

At the conclusion of his prayer, the king received such of the foreign ambassadors as required an audience.

When the monarch was indisposed, or was undergoing

medical treatment, which he did regularly every month, he received, in his bed, all the persons to whom he felt disposed to accord so great an honour; the most distinguished or intimate being ranged in two rows on either side; but this favour was never granted, save to individuals of high birth, of great reputation, or formally invited by himself.[1]

From his chamber Louis XIV. passed into his cabinet, where he found, or was followed by all who had the right of entrance; and where he issued his orders for the day.[2] This done, every one retired, save the legitimized princes, MM. d'Montchevreuil and d'O. their former governors, Mansard, and the Marquis d'Antin, the son of Madame de Montespan. The interval which ensued must have afforded alike repose and satisfaction to the monarch, as well as profitable amusement to the members of his family, for it was then that they discussed plans, buildings, and gardens; and the king terminated the conversation only when compelled to do so by public business. During this time the court awaited the re-appearance of Louis XIV. in the great gallery; the captain of the guard alone being seated near the door of the cabinet, where he was informed when the king was ready to attend mass, at which his private band sang an anthem.

During his progress to the chapel every one addressed

[1] In 1714 the First President de Novion having approached the bed of Louis XIV, who was indisposed, the Duke d'Aumont, first gentleman of the chamber, drew him back by his gown exclaiming; "Where are you going? Retire immediately; persons of your description do not enter within the balustrade unless summoned by the king."

[2] Versailles Ancien and Moderne.

him who desired the privilege; it being merely necessary to intimate such a wish to the captain of the guard; and even this formality was dispensed with where the individuals were persons of high rank. On his return from the mass, the king entered the council-chamber; and at one o'clock he dined.

The dinner was always *au petit couvert*, that is, the king dined alone in his own chamber, at a square table placed opposite the centre window, where three courses and a dessert were regularly served, Louis XIV. being constitutionally a great eater. When the table was laid, the courtiers entered, and the first gentleman of the chamber announced to the king that the dinner was served; the monarch then took his seat, and in the absence of the grand chamberlain, was waited on by the same functionary. Sometimes, but very rarely, the dauphin, and subsequently the dauphin and his sons, were present at the *petit couvert*, standing; nor did the king ever invite them to be seated; while as a matter of course the same ceremony was observed towards the princes of the blood and the cardinals. *Monsieur* frequently attended, presented the napkin, and remained standing like the rest, until after the lapse of a few moments, during which he continued to fulfil the duties of the grand-chamberlain, the king inquired if he would not be seated; upon which the Duke d'Orleans made a profound bow, and his royal brother desired that a seat should be brought for him. This seat was a stool, which was placed behind the chair of the monarch; but nevertheless *Monsieur* remained standing until the king repeated: "Be seated, brother;" upon which the duke availed himself of the permission accorded to him, and retained his position

until the termination of the repast, when he once more presented the napkin, and thus completed his duties.

No lady was ever admitted to the *petit couvert* save Madame de Lamothe, the wife of the marshal, who had retained this privilege from her former appointment of governess to the children of France; but it was one of which she seldom availed herself. Immediately that she appeared, however, a stool was placed for her, from the fact of her being patented a duchess.

The *grands couverts* were extremely rare; and were generally held at Fontainebleau upon occasions of ceremony.

On rising from table the king paused for a few moments in the saloon to afford the persons of rank who might desire to address him, an opportunity of so doing, before he returned to his cabinet; after which he entered, and the door was instantly closed. Then it was that he again devoted a short interval to his natural children, and the members of his household; and received the dauphin when he had not presented himself at the *lever*. Having done this he fed his dogs, and amused himself for a time by playing with them; after which he demanded his wardrobe, and changed his dress before the small number of courtiers whom the first gentleman of the chamber had thought proper to admit; and this was no sooner accomplished, than he left the palace by a private staircase, in order to reach his carriage which awaited him in the marble court.

Louis XIV. was not only partial to the open air, but it was to him a necessary of life, for when he was long deprived of it, he suffered painfully from headache; an infirmity which he attributed to the inordinate

use of perfumes in which his mother, Anne of Austria, had constantly indulged; and to which he had imbibed so strong an antipathy, that those who approached his person were compelled to forego a luxury at that period appreciated almost beyond any other. This great craving for fresh air, had rendered the monarch almost insensible to the changes of temperature to which he was necessarily exposed; he cared neither for heat, cold, nor rain; and it required that the weather should be bad indeed for him to forego his exercise, which consisted either in stag-hunting, shooting, or overlooking his workmen. Occasionally, also, he drove out, accompanied by the ladies of the court, to whom he gave pic-nics in the forests of Marly or Fontainebleau. For these parties none were eligible unless expressly invited, save the principal officers of his household; but even on the occasions when these little fêtes were held in the gardens of Versailles, or in those of the Trianon, the king alone wore his hat.

At Marly, on the contrary, when the monarch went there unaccompanied by his female court, all were at liberty to follow him, to join him, or to quit him as they pleased; and that palace, to which Louis XIV. avowedly retired to escape from the etiquette of Versailles, also possessed another privilege. The king no sooner left the state apartments than he said; "Your hats, gentlemen;" upon which courtiers, officers of the guard, architects, and builders, obeyed him by covering their heads. The hunt had also its immunity, for one invitation sufficed; and the same indulgence was extended to the royal card tables. The king was partial to high play, and fond of seeing it constantly going forward. In the principal

saloon lansquenet was the leading game; but in the others all were indiscriminately permitted.

On returning from the drive the king again changed his dress, and remained for a short time in his cabinet; after which he proceeded to the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, where he remained until ten o'clock, which was the hour of supper; when the house-steward on duty, wand in hand, gave notice to the captain of the guard who occupied the antechamber; and who, throwing open the door, announced that the king was served.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Louis XIV. walked to the supper-room. During this interval the officers had made the *preparations;* that is, they had tasted the bread and salt, and tried the plates, the fork, the spoon, the knife, and the tooth-picks of the king. The meats had been brought in (according to the ceremonial decreed by the ordonnance of the 7th of January, 1681), preceded by two guards, a huissier, an officer of the pantry, the comptroller-general, a comptroller of the buttery, and an equerry of the kitchen, followed by two other guards, to prevent all contact with the royal food.

This done, Louis XIV. in his turn, preceded by the house-steward, and two ushers, bearing flambeaux, advanced and took his seat in front of his *nef*[1] and his *cadenas;*[2] and looking round him, found himself surrounded by all the princes and princesses of France, accompanied, in latter years, by their children; and moreover, a numerous circle of courtiers and ladies. He immediately desired the princes and princesses to take

[1] The *nef* was a species of gold or enamelled vase in which the linen was enclosed.

[2] The *cadenas* was a casket containing the knife, fork, &c.

their seats; and they had no sooner done so, than six noblemen stationed themselves at each end of the table, in order to wait upon the king, and to renew the trial of the meats. When the king wished to drink, the cup-bearer exclaimed aloud: "Drink for the king."

The principal officers of the cellar made a profound bow, approached with an enamelled cup and two decanters upon a salver, and tasted the liquids; the king then drank; and the officials, with a second salutation, replaced the decanters upon the side-board. When he had supped, the monarch rose; and his example was followed by the whole of the guests. Two guards and an usher led the way; and the king, followed by all who had been present at the repast, proceeded to his bed-chamber. On entering, he remained leaning for a few minutes against the balustrade at the foot of the bed; and then, after bowing to the ladies, passed into his cabinet, where he gave the watch-word to the captain of the guard. When this was done, all the royal family entered in their turn: the king occupied one arm-chair, and *Monsieur* a second; but the dauphin remained standing as well as the other princes. The princesses were all seated upon stools; and the ladies of honour were in waiting in the council-closet which adjoined that of the king.

Towards midnight Louis XIV. rose, and again went to feed his dogs; after which he returned and took his leave for the night, before he retired to his chamber to prayer. The *petit coucher* then commenced, to which all were admitted who had the privilege of the morning *entrées*, or who held office; and although the audience was a short one, it was nevertheless the moment chosen

by those who had a favour to ask, or a petition to offer.

All had previously been prepared for the night-toilette of the monarch. The *en-cas* had been deposited upon the side-board, the arm-chair wheeled to the fire, and the dressing-gown and slippers placed near it. The barber had collected the napkins and the combs; and the famous candlestick with its two wax-lights, by which the courtiers estimated the amount of their present favour, was on a table near the fauteuil. When the king approached his chair, he gave to the valet de chambre his watch and reliquary, and loosened his blue ribbon, which he delivered to the nobleman in waiting, together with his waistcoat and cravatte; he then seated himself; and the first valet-de-chambre, assisted by one of his companions, detached his garters, while two valets of the wardrobe removed his shoes, his stockings, and *haut-de-chausses*, and a couple of pages presented his slippers.

This done, the dauphin approached with the night-shirt, which had previously been warmed by a valet of the wardrobe; and the first valet de chambre having lifted the candlestick from the table, the king indicated the nobleman who was to have the honour of lighting him to bed; which was no sooner decided than the door-keeper exclaimed:

"Now, gentlemen, pass out."

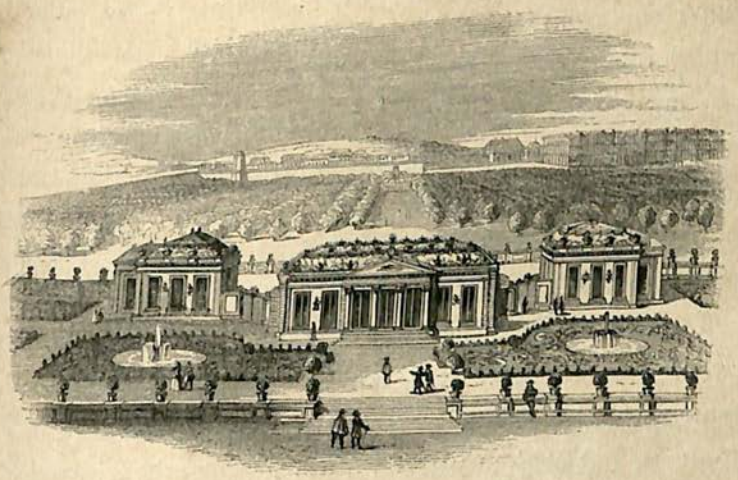
The whole of the assistants then left the room, save the candle-bearer and the physician; when the king decided upon the dress which he would wear on the following day, got into bed, and made a sign to the physician that he might approach, and ascertain the state of his health. The monarch was then finally left

alone with Bontems, who closed his curtains, extinguished the tapers in the candlestick, arranged the night lights, and took possession of the watch-bed![1]

We feel all the puerility of these details—all the tedium of these pompous nothings; but we have deemed it impossible to give an accurate idea of Louis XIV. as he really was, without condemning both ourselves and our readers to the weariness of this monotonous chapter.

Well might Madame de Maintenon exclaim in a letter to her brother, written in 1684; "Save those who fill the highest stations, I know of none more unfortunate than those who envy them. If you could only form an idea of what it is!"

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.



CHAPTER VIII.

INTERIOR ECONOMY OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—DIVISIONS IN THE ROYAL FAMILY—THE PALACE-ETIQUETTE—MADAME DE MAINTENON ATTEMPTS HER PUBLIC RECOGNITION—OPPOSITION OF LOUVOIS—THE SATIRES OF MEUDON—THE ENGLISH LETTER—DEATH OF CHARLES II. OF ENGLAND—THE PRINCE OF ORANGE—ARRIVAL OF JAMES II. AND HIS QUEEN IN FRANCE—THE DUKE DE LAUZUN—MUNIFICENCE OF LOUIS XIV.—MARY OF MODENA—INDISPOSITION OF LOUIS XIV.—RESTLESSNESS OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—MARRIAGE OF MADEMOISELLE DE NANTES AND THE DUKE DE BOURBON-CONDÉ—THE WINDOW OF THE TRIANON—THE CIVIL WAR IN THE CEVENNES—FÊTE AT VERSAILLES—DEPARTURE OF THE YOUNG NOBILITY FOR THE GERMAN ARMY—PRINCE EUGÈNE—IMPRUDENCE OF LOUVOIS—INTERCEPTED LETTERS—THE PRINCESS DE CONTI—MADEMOISELLE DE CHOIN AND M. DE CLERMONT—DEATH OF CONDÉ—THE "HERMITAGE" OF MARLY.

We have already stated, that immediately upon her marriage, Madame de Maintenon, being unable to bear the royal arms upon her equipages, compromised the difficulty by suppressing those of Scarron, and carrying only her own, without, however, adopting the widow's lozenge.

The apartments which were prepared for her at Versailles, were at the top of the grand staircase opposite to those of the king, and on the same floor; and a similar

arrangement was thenceforward made in every palace which she from time to time inhabited. Moreover, public business was from the same period transacted constantly in her apartment, where two arm-chairs occupied either side of the fire-place, one for the monarch, and the other for herself; while two stools stood near, one intended for her work-bag, and the other for the accommodation of the minister.

During the discussions which ensued, she was occupied either in reading, or with her tapestry-frame; and consequently heard all that passed between the king and Louvois, but seldom uttered a word, save when appealed to by the former; and even then gave her opinion guardedly, appearing to take little interest in what was going forward; although it was soon known, that she had previously exposed her views upon the various questions to the minister in private.

As regarded her social relations, she never paid visits to any of the princesses of the blood, not even to *Madame;* nor did any of them enter her apartments unless summoned to an audience; a circumstance which was so rare in its occurrence that it always became the gossip of the court. Whenever she desired to speak to the daughters of the king, she sent to command their presence; and as she almost invariably did so in order to express her displeasure at some imprudence of which they had been guilty, they always obeyed in trembling, and left her in tears. The Duke du Maine, alone, was free to come and go as he listed, always sure of an affectionate welcome, which he returned as warmly; for from his earliest boyhood he had loved Madame de Maintenon better than any other person upon earth.

From the period of the king's marriage, those divisions commenced in the royal family, which were destined to throw so deep a gloom over the conclusion of his reign. The dauphin lived entirely at Meudon; seldom visited Versailles, and never again passed the night there; while the monarch could not conceal even from himself the painful conviction of his son's increasing distaste to an union which was equally unpalatable to his people. MONSEIGNEUR, indeed, lost no opportunity of expressing his sentiments upon the subject to those about him, and never gratified Madame de Maintenon by any other title than that of "my absurd step-mother;" a pertinacity of bitterness which deeply wounded the king. It was in vain, however, that Louis XIV, by constantly receiving company in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, endeavoured, in this manner, to overcome the repugnance of MONSEIGNEUR to his stately bride. The prince resolutely refused to the last to regard her as the wife of the monarch; and even, on one occasion, when the king had taken him by the arm, trusting that from respect he would not venture to break away from him, and had thus led him to the threshold of her apartment, he no sooner saw the door open, than, disengaging his arm, he made a profound bow, and instantly retired. Thenceforward the very name of the dauphin became odious to Madame de Maintenon; but this fact produced no effect whatever upon the prince.

Madame, in her turn, disappeared from the court, and passed her time at Fontainebleau, where she regularly spent several hours each day in writing those witty and satirical letters to her brother, Prince Anthony Ulric of Bavaria, and other friends at her native court,

which afterwards became so famous. Not satisfied by detailing in these the events which were passing before her own eyes, she diligently informed herself of all the details connected with the private life of Louis XIV, from his earliest years, and thus made her correspondence a court-history of the most curious description. Persons and facts were alike portrayed with a stinging pen; and enough has been said of the peculiar habits and feelings of Charlotte-Elizabeth of Bavaria, to afford earnest of the unhesitating vigour with which her portraits were painted; while, as she bitterly hated Madame de Maintenon, she did not spare her one verbal indignity which could render her ridiculous in the eyes of a foreign court.

Thus persecuted from without, the quasi-queen found but slight compensation in the enforced homage of those of her own immediate circle, and the title of *majesty* conferred upon her by her personal attendants, whose extreme scrupulousness upon this point amounted to an epigram.

While the public were still sneeringly alluding to the strange elevation of "the widow Scarron;" Madame de Montespan throwing out keen and stinging inferences, calculated to sully the past reputation of "her children's governess;" and the whole court shrugging their shoulders, half in regret and half in disdain, as they found themselves compelled to prostrate all their tastes and habits before a person hitherto their inferior both in birth and rank; the palace menials were prodigal of sonorous words, by which the favour of the king was so evidently conciliated, that the attendants of a higher grade made strenuous efforts to imitate their example. That they, however, experienced considerable reluctance to expose themselves to sarcasm through the adoption of this habit

was made manifest on one occasion by Bontems, when in returning to Pélisson a book which he had lent to Madame de Maintenon, after making her acknowledgment for his politeness, the courtly servitor added, "I am assured that Her Majes—— I *would* have said, that *Madame* has read it."

That this affectation of royalty was pleasurable to the lady herself, will not, perhaps, admit of doubt; for although, fearing to oppose the desire of the king that their marriage should remain unacknowledged, she never actually asserted herself as the wife of the monarch, she, nevertheless, betrayed considerable satisfaction whenever circumstances permitted her tacitly to appropriate the privileges of her newly-acquired position.[1] Thus on one occasion, when she presented herself at the gate of a convent into which all ingress was prohibited save to members of the royal family, and was announced to the abbess as Madame de Maintenon, the holy recluse had no sooner reminded her that she could only sanction her entrance in the event of her being the wife of the monarch, than she replied with a quiet smile; "You may open your doors, Madam; you may open your doors."

Nevertheless, the royal bride found herself abandoned by the actual members of the royal family, and recognised only by the *legitimized* princes,—a fact which assuredly rendered her desire to become the acknowledged wife of the monarch natural as well as probable. That her ambition alone would have sufficed to prompt such a wish, there can be no doubt; for what woman, placed in her position, and conscious that she had attained to it

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

by her own propriety of conduct, would not have been desirous of profiting to the utmost by so extraordinary an elevation? She had involved herself in all the tedium of a royal existence; and it can scarcely be attributed to her as a crime, that she endeavoured to secure its immunities while experiencing its privations.

Her first effort to accomplish this recognition had nearly proved successful; for her influence over the mind of the monarch, far from declining after their union, became even more powerful than before; but Louvois, who had spies in every direction, no sooner ascertained that the king had, in a moment of weakness, suffered himself to be betrayed into a promise that it should be made public, and was preparing to redeem his word, than he hastened to the palace, and having requested His Majesty to dismiss his attendants, declared the errand upon which he came; and reminded him that he had his royal pledge, never, upon any pretext whatever, to declare the marriage. He then, with considerable warmth, expatiated upon the inconvenience and degradation of such a step as that which he meditated, and entreated that he would reconsider the matter before he was compromised beyond remedy.

Louis XIV. did not attempt to conceal his change of purpose; but he condescended to evasions, and began to move towards another apartment in order to escape; when the attendants, who had been careful when they were compelled to withdraw not to close the door completely after them, saw Louvois suddenly rush before the king, and, throwing himself upon his knees, present the hilt of a small sword which he always wore, to the monarch, exclaiming: "Take my life, sire, that I may

not become the witness of a disgrace which will dishonour you in the eyes of all Europe."

Louis XIV. made an impatient gesture, and still strove to withdraw; but the minister kept his ground, declaring that the king would no sooner have yielded to this weakness, than he would be the victim of his own mortification and remorse; and, finally, he so wrought upon the wavering disposition of the monarch, that he induced him to repeat his promise that the marriage should never be declared.

The Archbishop of Paris, whom Louvois had summoned to second him in his enterprise, arrived shortly afterwards to confirm the king in his resolution; and thus, for a time, the hopes of Madame de Maintenon were frustrated.

The second attempt of the same nature proved equally unfortunate in its results. It was made on an occasion when the king for the first time caused the apartments of the late queen to be thrown open, upon the pretext of exhibiting therein the magnificent ornaments which he was about to present to the cathedral at Strasburg; but as it was generally believed, prior to their occupation by Madame de Maintenon. Such, however, was the opposition which he experienced, that, on the failure of this last effort, he authoritatively commanded the lady never again to venture upon such a request.[1]

Nor was this the only mortification to which Madame de Maintenon was subjected. Every day an epigram, a sonnet, or a ballad, made its appearance, which inflicted a bitter wound upon her pride, and cruelly harassed the

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

king, by whom all these pungent and perpetual satires were traced to the court of Meudon; while these were, after a time, followed by a letter, forwarded to Madame de Montespan by the Duchess of Portsmouth, the celebrated mistress through whose blandishments Louis XIV. had sought to detach Charles II. from the Dutch alliance. It was entirely written by the hand of the English monarch, and was to the following effect:—

"Sire: I conjure you in the name of the Great Henry, whose precious blood circulates in both our veins, to respect the Protestants, whom he looked upon as his children. If, as it is reported, you wish to compel them to renounce their religion under pain of banishment from your kingdom, I offer to them an asylum in that of England; where I will prove to them that I have the honour of being the grandson of the Great Henry, by the protection which I shall afford to those who for so long a period fought with distinction under his banner. I feel persuaded that you will remove from about your person the perfidious advisers who could have imagined such a proscription. There are a great number of those Protestants who have shed their blood in your service. What a recompense do you reserve to them! Want, and the disgrace of being banished from their country: from the country of the Great Henry! Where is the man who would not feel it an honour to have been born his subject? And shall it be the heir to his throne, his grandson, who destroys a work which it gave him so much trouble to consolidate, and which finally cost him his life? The kings of France should swear, on ascending the throne, never to suffer any Jesuit about their persons or in their families, since they were accused of co-operating in the assassination of

Henry IV; and that they dare, in the present day, to insult him even in his tomb by destroying his most cherished work. Listen, my brother and cousin, to the representations of one of your nearest relatives, who loves you as a king, and esteems you as his friend."

This letter, made public after the death of its writer by Madame de Montespan, produced the stronger effect as it seemed like a voice which had arisen from the grave to make a last and useless effort in favour of the unfortunate Calvinists; but Louis XIV. was already too far committed in this barbarous and inglorious persecution to recede.[1]

Charles II. died on the 16th February, 1685; and his successor, urged by the French king to render himself absolute, and by the Jesuits to re-establish alike their religion and their influence, commenced his reign as though these measures were already accomplished. Had he acted with more prudence it is probable that the English people, weary of revolution, might have gradually accustomed themselves to his faith, on condition that he left them in peace to exercise their own; but he was unguarded enough to receive the Nuncio of the Pope publicly at his court, at the very moment when he imprisoned the seven Protestant bishops whom he had endeavoured in vain to convert to the faith of Rome; and thus rendered himself obnoxious to the people at large by a line of conduct, both religious and political, for which they were totally unprepared.

Meanwhile, the Prince of Orange kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the throne of his father-in-law; and after the

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

birth of an heir to the crown, equipped the famous fleet which was destined to weaken the power of Louis XIV, and to depose James. In this strait, when the English king wrote to solicit assistance alike from the Emperor of Germany and the monarch of France, Louis alone prepared to aid his projects; but, before he had completed the necessary arrangements, it was announced to him by a courier, that the Queen of England and the Prince of Wales had landed at Calais under the protection of the Duke de Lauzun; who, after having gained the good graces of James II, as he had previously done those of Louis XIV, had been entrusted by the weak monarch with the safeguard of his wife and child. Neglected by both his daughters, abandoned by one son-in-law, and pursued by the other, the unhappy James had no alternative save to solicit for them an asylum in France.

When informing the king of her arrival in his territories, Mary of Modena observed in her letter, that one circumstance alone lessened the joy with which she confided herself to the protection of so great a king; and that one was, that she dared not bring to his feet the individual to whom both herself and the Prince of Wales were indebted for their liberty, and perhaps even for their lives.

In reply Louis XIV. declared that, partaking the hatred of the queen towards her enemies, he was equally ready to testify his satisfaction to the Duke de Lauzun by restoring him to his favour; and from that day granted to him the renewed privilege of the *grande entrée*, promising him, moreover, accommodation in the palace at Versailles.

"M. de Lauzun;" writes Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, in a letter dated 27th December, 1688; "must be much gratified by this adventure; he has exhibited sense, judgment, discretion, and courage; and has at last found his way to Versailles by London. He alone could have done this. The princess is indignant to think that the king is pleased with him; and that he is again to return to court." And again, on the 10th of January, 1689, she says; "He has apartments in the palace, at which he is much pleased. He has written to MADEMOISELLE, but she is so much incensed against him, that I doubt if he will be able to appease her."

The new favour of the duke, in fact, angered the princess to so extreme a degree that she ultimately wrote to Louis XIV, to entreat that he would banish him from the capital; his. infidelities, which never failed to reach her ears, having exasperated her feelings; and before the termination of the month, whether from the representations of MADEMOISELLE, or that Louis XIV. was displeased at the presumption and self-glory exhibited by the returned exile, the star of Lauzun once more paled. He was not only compelled to vacate his apartments, but was also refused the *entrées;* the romance and marvel of his chivalric expedition had subsided into mère common-place, and he found himself simply an insignificant item of the great sum total of the court.

In this instance, however, the romantic duke had richly merited a better fate, for he had availed himself in a gallant manner of the opportunity which had been afforded him; and the English queen had in no degree exaggerated her obligation to the hitherto weak and egotistical courtier.

When Louis XIV. permitted the visit of Lauzun to England, in order to deliver the princess his cousin from an importunate and ungrateful inmate, he had, in order to veil his real purpose, and to continue his demonstration of interest in the fortunes of James, commissioned him to watch over the safety of that monarch and his family; and, in case of peril, to afford them all the assistance which it might be in his power to offer; although in so doing it is extremely possible that the French king did not for a moment contemplate the probability that Lauzun could become an efficient help to the persecuted Stuarts; while it is certain that the actual progress of events gave to the mission of the duke an importance by no means anticipated even by himself.

In the course of December (1688) the Prince of Wales had been privately conveyed from Portsmouth to London, and concealed in a mean house outside the city, until he could with safety be removed from the country; while James and his queen had also secretly returned to London, in order to attempt a plan of evasion suggested by Lauzun, and which could only be effected from the capital. It was decided that the queen and her young son should first depart, under the charge of the duke, as by these means the escape of the king himself would be rendered less difficult, and his progress more rapid; and accordingly, on the night of the escape, the queen went to rest as usual; but rose an hour after midnight, and having hastily completed her preparations for flight, was consigned to the care of the duke by the king himself; who, as he beckoned him to enter the royal chamber, wrung his hand convulsively, and with eyes streaming with tears, gasped out in a low husky voice:

"Here is the queen: you know where to find my son: I confide both of them to your zeal and loyalty. Do not forsake them until you have delivered them safely into the hands of the Most Christian King of France; the most pious, and the greatest of monarchs."

Lauzun bent his knee; and pressed the royal hand to his lips in token of obedience, after which he withdrew to a remote corner of the chamber, while Mary of Modena approached the bed to take leave of her ill-fated husband. Their parting was a melancholy one, for each felt that it might, perhaps, be eternal; but after a time the weeping queen turned with a gesture of entreaty towards the French duke, who succeeded in leading her from the room. In five minutes more the fugitives were seated in the carriage of the Florentine minister; and after having secured the person of the prince with his nurses, they made their way to the river, near Westminster, where M. de Lauzun had a boat in waiting, rowed only by a single boatman, of whose fidelity and trustworthiness he had previously assured himself.

The night was dark and stormy; the rain fell in torrents, and the swollen river dashed its wind-swept waters heavily against the banks; but despite these unfavourable circumstances, they reached the opposite shore so rapidly that the carriage which the duke had hired to convey them below Gravesend was not at its post when they reached the appointed spot; and thus, while Dufour, the confidential valet of Lauzun, proceeded to seek the missing coachman at a small public-house situated a short distance from the river, the queen remained for twenty minutes buried to her ankles in mud, and exposed to the whole fury of the storm.

The extreme energy and impatience of the French valet aroused the curiosity of the landlord; who, resolved if possible to solve what he felt convinced must prove to be a secret of some importance, no sooner saw the tardy coachman mount his box, and prepare to set forth in search of his employers, than he determined to accompany him, under the pretext of tendering his services. He accordingly armed himself with a lantern, and springing upon the foot-board of the carriage, arrived with the equipage at the river-bank, when he instantly turned the full glare of the light on the shivering group who were awaiting its advent. Fortunately one of the servants of the duke, who immediately detected the motive of this sudden illumination, had the presence of mind to affect to slip, and throwing himself upon the bearer of the lantern, they both fell together, and in so doing extinguished the candle, and afforded to the illustrious fugitives an opportunity of entering the carriage undetected.

A piece of gold soon appeased the wrath of the landlord; and this done, the travellers drove off; and a mile or two upon the road were met by a friend of Lauzun, a certain M. de Saint Victor, accompanied by three horsemen, well mounted, and armed to the teeth; by whom they were escorted at a little distance, and thus protected from absolute danger, although still a prey to the most gloomy apprehensions.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when the little party reached the secluded bay in which a yacht, hired by the duke, was awaiting their arrival, whose captain was entirely ignorant of the individuality of his passengers, and not a moment was lost in their embarkation. The queen, closely veiled, and carrying the Prince of Wales under her arm like a bundle of clothing, at once

descended to the cabin, where she remained throughout the passage; while M. de Lauzun, to whom every order given by the captain was instantly translated, stood prepared to plunge a dagger into his breast upon the slightest suspicion of treason. He, however, evinced no such intention; and after a favourable run, the yacht cast anchor at five o'clock in the evening at Dunes, near Calais.

By singular good fortune the infant prince, at that period only six months old, had never uttered a cry either in the carriage, or on board the vessel; but at the moment when the anchor was dropped, having awoke hungry, and his nurse, then suffering from sea sickness, being unable to satisfy his craving, he began to moan so piteously, that the sound soon attracted the attention of the captain; who, instantly suspecting the truth, turned with a gesture of intelligence towards the duke, exclaiming, "I will lose no time in putting my little friend ashore:" and at the moment of disembarkation, when the queen emerged from her hiding-place, and stood unveiled upon the deck of his vessel, he approached her with profound respect; and seizing an opportunity when he could not be overheard by any of the crew, murmured with downcast eyes; "I shall probably be hanged on my return; but I shall at least die with the consciousness that I have assisted in saving the life of Your Majesty."

Mary of Modena strove to smile amid her tears as she extended her hand, and permitted him to raise it to his lips; after which she repaid his loyalty with regal munificence, and stepped on shore. At Calais she was received by M. de Charost, who lodged her in the house of a wealthy citizen, apologizing for an

absence of ceremonial which had been solely occasioned by his ignorance of her intended arrival; to which address the fugitive queen answered with a sad smile, as she flung herself into a chair with the royal child clasped to her bosom; "Spare yourself all further excuses, Sir; it is more than three months since I have felt so well, and so tranquil as regards my own fate, or that of the Prince of Wales."

An hour after her landing, Mary of Modena addressed the letter to which we have already alluded, to Louis XIV, who hastened to reply in a spirit of chivalry worthy of a great and prosperous monarch.

Nevertheless, although assured of a welcome which gratified her heart, and satisfied her dignity, the queen resolutely refused to proceed further than Boulogne until she received satisfactory assurances of her husband's evasion; determined, as she declared, should he unhappily be arrested, to return and share his martyrdom. The high-hearted Mary of Modena was not, however, destined to undergo so bitter a trial, for news soon reached her of the successful flight of James from the capital, upon which she at once commenced her journey towards Paris.

When Louis XIV. was informed that the illustrious fugitive was approaching, he proceeded, accompanied by *Monsieur* and MONSEIGNEUR, to meet her; and halted near Chalon, in a cross-way whence several roads diverged, where he waited more than a quarter of an hour before any trace of the travellers appeared; at the close of that time, however, the carriage containing the Prince of Wales halted a few paces from his own, and it had no sooner done so than the king alighted, and

opening the door with his own hand, said cheerfully; "I must make the first visit." He then took the royal infant in his arms, kissed it several times, expatiated upon its beauty, and only restored it finally to its nurse in order to welcome the queen.

Mary of Modena no sooner recognised Louis XIV, than she alighted in her turn, and advanced towards him with an unsteady step; but in the next instant the lips of the king were fastened upon her forehead.

"Sire;" she said in a trembling voice; "you see before you an unfortunate princess, who comes to seek her only consolation in the kindness of Your Majesty; and I will venture to add, that I am not altogether unworthy of it, as I have always been sincerely attached to your interests."

"Madam;" replied Louis, with one of those beaming smiles which rarely but gloriously irradiated his fine countenance; "I render you to-day only a melancholy service; but I trust soon to do you one of more importance, and more worthy alike of you, of the king my brother, and of myself."

He then presented *Monsieur* and MONSEIGNEUR to the royal stranger; who, after an exchange of compliments, followed the king into her coach, where she was already accompanied by Lady Powis and the Signora Vittoria Montécuculi, to whom she was much attached. Thus they proceeded to St. Germain, where they arrived at four o'clock; and they had no sooner driven into the grand court of the palace than the king alighted, and offering his hand to his illustrious visitor, conducted her to a magnificent apartment which had belonged to the late queen; saying courteously as they crossed the threshold:—

"If indeed Maria Theresa of Austria can still feel an interest in earthly things, even in that heaven to which her soul has ascended, she can but be gratified on seeing her place occupied by another Mary, so beautiful and so virtuous."

After having thus nobly installed his royal guest, Louis XIV. with his suite returned to Versailles; and on taking possession of the palace of St. Germain, which was thenceforward to become the abode of the illustrious exiles, Mary of Modena found herself at the head of the same household which had formerly belonged to the French queen, and surrounded by every appliance of comfort and luxury; while among the costly presents which had been prepared for her, she discovered a purse containing ten thousand louis d'ors.

Meanwhile James II, after a perilous passage, had landed in his turn at Ambleteuse, where he was met by the Duke d'Aumont at the head of the nobles of the province, and escorted to Boulogne, whence Mary of Modena had only departed on the previous evening. On the morrow, after mass, the fugitive king put a loaf of bread and a small bottle of wine into his pocket, and throwing himself into a hack-chaise, proceeded to Abbeville, where he slept; and afterwards halted at Luzarche, where he found a relay of horses, and several suits of clothes which had been forwarded for his use by Louis XIV.

On the 7th of January the French king despatched a gentleman of his bedchamber to the English monarch, to request that he would immediately set out for St. Germain, where he himself awaited his arrival in the sleeping-room of the queen, who was reposing after the fatigue of her hurried journey. Louis XIV. reached St.

Germain at five o'clock; and at half-past six James II. drove into the court, preceded by a number of torch-bearers, and accompanied by the first valet de chambre of his royal host, and the Chevalier de St. Deaude, the lieutenant of the body guard, who had been selected by Louis as the immediate attendants of the exiled monarch, and who had hastened to receive his orders at the outer gate of the palace.

As he alighted, the eye of James fell upon the figure of Lauzun, who, in the midst of a crowd of courtiers, was waiting to welcome him; and throwing his arms affectionately about his neck, he exclaimed earnestly: "Here is a good friend whom I am delighted to meet in this place."

Louis XIV. had meanwhile advanced as far as the state guard-room to welcome his royal guest; and as he approached, James bent his knee; but he had no sooner done so, than Louis raised and embraced him several times in succession; after which he said gaily: "Let us lose no more time; the queen is dying to see Your Majesty;" and the two sovereigns forthwith proceeded to the apartment of Mary of Modena, the French king persisting in walking on the left of his companion, despite his efforts to prevent it.

The meeting of the royal pair was most affecting, and tears stood in the eyes of Louis XIV. as he witnessed their emotion; nor was it until they had begun to recover their composure that he prepared to return to Versailles; when, on perceiving that James was about to conduct him to the gate, he remarked with a smile: "You must forego your purpose, for to-day you are still my guest. To-morrow when you visit me at Versailles, I will do the

honours in form; a compliment you shall return the next time I come to St. Germain, after which we will dispense with ceremony."

As he was traversing the state apartments, the munificent monarch caused a casket containing ten thousand pistoles to be deposited on a bureau in the English king's bedchamber; after which he glanced around to satisfy himself that the sumptuous apparel and other luxuries which he had ordered to be transported there for the comfort of his guest, had been duly delivered; and then ascending his carriage, was driven rapidly towards Versailles, surrounded by his noble and brilliant body guard.[1]

Nor did the munificence of the French monarch limit itself to this princely reception; before night the court of James was regulated; six hundred thousand livres annually were allotted for the expenses of his establishment; and he was provided with the same guards and officers as Louis himself. Immediate preparations were, moreover, set on foot to effect the restoration of the fugitive king; who, however, as weak in adversity as he had previously been puerile in prosperity, took little interest in the efforts of his generous ally; but passed his time principally in the society of the Jesuits, whose convent he frequently visited, asserting that he was a member of their Order; and what is still more singular, the assertion was literally true; for he had, while Duke of York, caused himself to be admitted one of the brotherhood.

This pusillanimity in a dethroned king so lowered him in the eyes of the court, that he became a theme for the

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

ballad-mongers; and after having been driven out of England, was fated to become the jest of France; while so little merit did he derive from his bigotry, that the Archbishop of Rheims, the brother of Louvois, said publicly in his antechamber at St. Germain; "We have here a worthy man who has lost three kingdoms for a mass." From Rome he received nothing save indulgences and lampoons; and throughout the whole revolution his faith availed him so little, that when the Prince of Orange, although the head of the Calvinist party, put to sea for the purpose of dethroning him, the Ambassador of the Catholic King at the Hague caused masses to be said for the success of the expedition.[1]

During the ceremonial receptions of the English sovereigns by the different members of the royal family, Madame de Maintenon had remained secluded in her own apartments; but these were no sooner at an end than she prepared in her turn to pay her respects to the exiled queen; and for that purpose proceeded to St. Germain, where she was detained for several minutes in an antechamber, before she was admitted to her presence. The delay was accidental, and the time which it occupied was short; but the first grew into an insult, and the latter swelled into centuries, when subjected to the morbid irritation of jealous haughtiness, consequent upon a sudden elevation, and a false position.

Thus was it that in an accidental circumstance, Madame de Maintenon, too high-placed to consider herself as a mere subject, and although not the recognised Queen of France, yet esteeming herself, as the wife of the king,

[1] Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

at least on an equality with an English princess, felt deeply aggrieved at the necessity in which she had found herself of waiting the convenience of another; and immediately imbibed a strong prejudice against the royal exile.

The graceful reception of Mary of Modena was well calculated to remove any unfavourable impression, had she had a less tyrannical feeling to contend against than that of mortified vanity, for as her stately visitor swept into the room with the expression of haughty humility which she well knew how to assume, Her Majesty exclaimed frankly; "I trust, madam, that you will forgive the delay which has occurred in your introduction, when you remember that I am myself much more to pity, in having lost so much time, during which I might have enjoyed the happiness of seeing and conversing with you."

Despite this graciousness, however, the disconcerted favourite, on her return to Versailles, complained bitterly to Louis XIV. of the indignity to which she had been subjected by his royal guests; and although the king affected to smile at the circumstance, and to declare that it involved no possible affront, it is nevertheless certain that when, some days afterwards, the King and Queen of England appeared at Versailles, Madame de Maintenon contributed in no slight degree to render their position one of difficulty. James and Mary were anxious in their misfortune to retain as many external evidences of their rank, and to exact as much respect from those about them, as they could still enforce; while Louis XIV, at the instigation of his wife, endeavoured to make them acknowledge his own supremacy in all things; and thus, it was a

considerable time before the proper ceremonial to be observed between the two courts could be regulated.

Ultimately, however, it was decided that James II. should consider himself as on an equality with MONSEIGNEUR, and that Louis XIV. should act in the same manner towards the Prince of Wales; while the dauphin, who was only to occupy a folding seat in the presence of the English king, was to be authorized to use an arm-chair in that of his wife; and this great question once decided, the exiled sovereigns, who had, in their hour of need, come to ask of France a refuge from persecution, and who had been so royally received, soon became the observed of the whole court; upon whom, however, they severally produced a very different impression.

The mean, undignified, and characterless physiognomy of the king; his vacillating principles, limited intellect, and bigoted prejudices, formed a fearful contrast with the physical and mental perfections of his high-minded and beautiful consort. To eyes and hair of the deepest black, Mary of Modena combined a complexion of the most dazzling whiteness; while a somewhat ample mouth was redeemed by a smile of the most exquisite sweetness, and teeth of extraordinary beauty. Tall and finely formed, the English queen boasted, moreover, hands and arms which both in colour and form might have vied with those of Anne of Austria herself; and her voice was singularly harmonious. Highly intellectual, she not only conversed agreeably, but frequently put forth ideas alike startling and novel; while the extreme propriety of her conduct, based upon a religious principle which, however admirable in itself, she carried to an excess bordering upon superstition, was at once the marvel and

the reproach of the beauties of the court of Louis XIV; who did not scruple to whisper among themselves that the nullity of James II, combined with the atmosphere of Versailles, would not fail ere long to work a moral revolution in the staid and matronly bearing of the English queen: a prophecy which was, however, never realized.[1]

The energetic but somewhat tardy efforts of Louis XIV. in favour of his royal guest were suddenly interrupted by a dangerous illness. Although the French king had, as yet, only attained his forty-ninth year, a premature old age was fast growing upon him: he had already suffered severely on several occasions from gout, but the indisposition which now supervened was of a nature to create general apprehension. It was induced by an internal fistula; and although the science of surgery had made considerable progress during his reign, it was not yet sufficiently advanced to cope with so unfamiliar a malady. The Cardinal de Richelieu had died of the same disease from the inability of those about him; and consequently the danger of the monarch spread consternation throughout France. The churches were constantly crowded with devotees, offering up prayers for his recovery; and general lamentations were heard on all sides.

Felix, the head-surgeon, no sooner ascertained the precise nature of the king's ailment, than he shut himself up in the Hôtel-Dieu; and during an entire month, assisted by the most able members of his profession, invented instruments calculated at once to abridge the necessary operation, and to render it less painful; and with

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Boeuf.

these he operated upon patients similarly affected in the public hospitals, as well as others who were induced by the offer of large rewards and the hope of cure to submit to the same trial; but most of these died under the knife, and were buried during the night. Notwithstanding this precaution, however, the bodies were seen leaving the Hôtel-Dieu; and a rumour spread that a conspiracy against the life of the king had been discovered, and that the culprits had been put to death by poison and torture. General alarm ensued, and every one was for a time in terror of momentary arrest.[1]

Having at length acquired the necessary dexterity, Felix warned the king to prepare for the operation, without concealing from him the peril to which he would be exposed; but Louis XIV. did not shrink from the danger, merely desiring that the affair might be kept a profound secret, in order not to increase the public alarm; and commanding that the dauphiness should receive company, and give a ball, as though his indisposition were of a trivial nature.

Four persons only were accordingly aware of the extreme peril of the crisis, and these four remained in his chamber throughout the operation,—Madame de Maintenon, Louvois, the Dauphin, and Felix, who himself made all the preparations, and ultimately removed the fistula without assistance. Throughout the whole agony, the king did not utter a groan; but, exhausted as he was, insisted upon receiving the ministers, who accordingly transacted business during the evening at his bedside; and, in order that no sensation should be created

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

in foreign courts by a report of his danger, he, on the following day, gave audience to the several ambassadors; while to this physical and moral courage he superadded, on this trying occasion, a munificence worthy of a great monarch, by presenting to the skilful operator who had rescued him from death, a fine estate valued at more than fifty thousand crowns.

From this period the king never again frequented the theatres; while the dauphiness, whose melancholy hourly increased, and who was already suffering under the first attacks of the wasting hypochondria of which she ultimately died in 1690, entered into no public amusements, and remained constantly in her own apartments.

Madame de Montespan, who, as we have already stated, quitted Versailles in tears and wretchedness, had left behind her a void at court, that was destined never to be filled up. Her wit, her magnificence, and her profusion, had collected about her a circle as brilliant as it was attractive, and one which the increasing seriousness of the king offered no encouragement to renew. Nor did the lady abdicate with more philosophy than the courtiers witnessed her departure; for although in her first moments of mortification and resentment she retired to the convent of St. Joseph, her worldly habits rendered such a seclusion intolerable to her; and she wandered from Paris to Bourbon, and from Bourbon to Fontevrault, without finding peace or consolation anywhere.

More than ever tenacious of the honours due to her position as the mother of the king's children, she caused her hôtel in the capital to be fitted up with almost regal splendour, superintending all the details herself with the most rigorous exactness. There was but one arm-chair

in her reception-room; and when she was visited by the princes her sons, they were merely accommodated with chairs without arms. When they took their leave, she accompanied them in consideration of their rank, to the centre of the room; but this was a condescension which she never exhibited save towards MADEMOISELLE and themselves.

Certain historians have asserted that, at this period, although unable to submit herself to a monastic life, she performed austere penances, and wore a garment of hair-cloth; but she herself makes a jest of these assertions; declaring that she preferred works of charity, and indulged in these without restriction, believing them to be far more efficacious than the infliction of any personal suffering.

In 1686, the king married Mademoiselle de Nantes, the elder of her daughters, to the Duke de Bourbon-Condé; but although the bridal ceremonies were of the most magnificent description, the festivities by which they were accompanied were not sufficiently brilliant to arouse the court from its increasing torpidity. The poor little princess, who had only just attained her twelfth year, could scarcely move under the burthen of her jewels; and her head-dress was declared by Madame de Maintenon to weigh more than her whole person.

The only taste which Louis XIV. still retained in all its original force was that of building; and after having made the palace of Versailles the wonder of all Europe, he proceeded to erect the Trianon, of which Le Nôtre designed the gardens in a style perfectly dissimilar to that he had employed for those of the royal residence, of which the present edifice was merely destined to be an

appendage. Originally, according to Madame de Sévigné, the spot selected by the monarch had been occupied by a pavilion, about which were cultivated flowers and fruit-trees of various descriptions, and which bore the name of the Palace of Flora. This pavilion was lined with plate-glass, and porcelain mosaics, and ornamented without by china vases; while the gardens contained long avenues of orange trees, myrtles, and jasmins, planted in the open ground. Pretty as it was, however, the king soon wearied of it; and having purchased some adjacent land from the monks of St. Genevieve, he commissioned Mansard to build a palace in imitation of the Italian villas. Within a year the elegant edifice, which has since become so celebrated as the favourite retreat of the lovely and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, was completed.

On one occasion Louis XIV. went to examine into the progress of the building, accompanied by Louvois, when he remarked that a particular window was out of proportion, and did not harmonize with the rest; the minister, however, jealous of his dignity as comptroller of the royal works, would not admit the objection, but maintained that it was perfectly similar to the others.

The king made no reply; but on the following day he returned to Trianon, and desired Le Nôtre to declare his opinion as to the size of the disputed window. Le Nôtre, fearful of offending either the monarch or his minister, endeavoured to give an evasive answer, upon which Louis commanded him to measure it carefully, and he was reluctantly compelled to obey; Louvois, meanwhile, murmuring at the pertinacity of the king, and Louis himself walking to and fro, in great irritation. The result of the

trial proved that the window was too small; and the monarch had no sooner ascertained the fact than he turned angrily to his minister, declaring that he was becoming weary of his obstinacy; and that it was fortunate he had superintended the work himself, or the building would have been crooked.

As this scene had taken place in the presence of both courtiers and workmen, Louvois was deeply stung; and on entering his own house, he exclaimed furiously; "I am lost if I do not find some occupation for a man who can interest himself in such trifles. There is nothing but a war which can divert him from his buildings; and war he shall have. I will soon make him abandon his trowel."

He kept his word; and Europe was once more plunged into a general war, because a window had been made a few inches too narrow, and that a king had convicted a minister of error.[1]

It is, however, necessary, before we proceed, that we should take a brief retrospect of the intestine struggle in which Louis XIV. was already unhappily engaged.

During a considerable time the king congratulated himself upon the decision with which he had commenced the extirpation of heresy in his dominions; for, deceived by the lists of conversions that he received from the stewards and other officials in the provinces, as well as seduced by the continual congratulations and praises of the Jesuits, he began to look upon himself as an apostle; and to believe that all his past sins would be blotted out by the prowess of that sword which he was now wielding

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

for the faith. The converts were estimated to him by thousands, all of whom were stated to have at once abjured their errors, and communicated. There were, as he was assured, two thousand in one town, and six thousand in another, all restored to the true church; "And this, Sire, by the mere sight of your troops;" asserted Louvois; "as I had foretold to Your Majesty."

Louis XIV, who was in himself essentially truthful, and who never suspected for an instant that a man in whom he reposed the most implicit and entire confidence, would wilfully deceive him, accordingly placed the firmest faith in reports which flattered at once his vanity and his bigotry; while the victims of his error were, in fact, sacrificing their consciences to their fears, or to their interests; and purchasing immunity from the evils they apprehended by feigned abjurations; which were no sooner uttered than they were compelled to commit blasphemy, by partaking of the most sacred of all the sacraments with a lie upon their lips, and thus filling France with sacrilege.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, there were few families who had not to deplore some of their members condemned to exile; and despite all the precautions by which he surrounded himself, the monarch was occasionally compelled to feel that the great work of conversion had not been carried on without much individual suffering. He was, however, more annoyed than remorseful at the discovery; and the only effect which it produced was an increase of reserve, that led him to avoid every occasion of recurring to the subject; while so much did he dread to overhear the conversation of the great officers of state during his drives, that when he was about to

sleep or shoot at Marly, or Meudon, he, from this period, travelled alone in a calèche; and these drives, an occasional hunt, concerts, cards, and at intervals some tedious court ceremony, soon formed the sole amusements of that circle which had, only a few years previously, been the envy and admiration of all the civilized world.

On one occasion, however, in 1687, Louis XIV. gave a fête at Versailles which recalled by its magnificence the most palmy days of his reign. Four stalls were erected in the great saloon, covered with every luxury suited to the four seasons; and their contents were estimated at fifteen thousand louis d'ors. Gold and silver stuffs, jewels, and precious stones glittered on all sides, and for these the courtiers of both sexes gambled without incurring any risk, and carried away whatever they chanced to gain. When the tables were removed the king and the dauphin distributed the remainder of the prizes among the guests; but despite this profuse liberality the entertainment, profitable as it was, went off gloomily: all were anxious and ill at ease, for gaiety had given place to grandeur, and etiquette had superseded enjoyment.[1]

It was probably this fact which at that period induced some of the most gallant of the young French nobility, to exchange the tedium of so ponderous and burthensome a magnificence, for the novelty and excitement of foreign warfare; and to offer their services to the Emperor of Germany, whose forces were then in Hungary in arms against the Turks. Among these noble volunteers were included the Prince de Conti, the son-in-law of the king, and the Prince de la Roche-Sur-Yon,

[1] Histoire du Règne de Louis XIV, par *Reboulet.*

as well as Prince Eugène, and many other members of the most illustrious families in France.

The latter, who was the son of the Countess de Soïssons, had been destined for the church; but his predilection for a military life induced him to join the expedition, and to abandon for ever all pretensions to the cardinalate; when Louvois, discovering that his example was likely to prove contagious, and feeling that it was imprudent for France to strengthen the hands of a power against which she might soon declare herself in her turn, conceived and executed one of those extreme and disgraceful measures which were only too common throughout the latter years of the reign of Louis XIV, and which that monarch himself encouraged, in order to ascertain the secret feelings and motives of his courtiers. Having intercepted the letters brought by a courier from the seat of war, as well as possessed himself of others addressed to the illustrious combatants, he brought the whole, still sealed, to the king.

It was in vain that Madame de Maintenon endeavoured to make him comprehend the extent of his imprudence; not daring to expostulate aloud, she was condemned to find all her efforts useless; and as the letters were opened one by one she became convinced that the mischief which must ensue was incalculable. Nor was Louvois less embarrassed when he discovered that among them were one from his own son, and a second from the husband of his daughter; but he had passed the Rubicon, and was compelled to abide the issue.

Louis XIV. read through the whole of the packet, from the first sheet to the last, with the most complete composure, although the task must have been one of deep

and bitter mortification. In it he found letters from the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, the Duke de Villeroi, and many other young men of the highest rank; who, full of the excitement and enterprise by which they were surrounded, drew caustic comparisons between the court of Versailles and the camp of Buda; and jested on the subject of the "citizen-king, who was growing old before his time with his peasant-woman;" laughed at his taste for sieges, and his aversion to battles; and made merry on the subject of the palace-festivals, and the quasi-queen.

All this was gall and wormwood to a monarch who, intoxicated with the incense of adulation, and jealous of his personal renown, was now condemned to see himself hurled from his pedestal; and to learn the hollowness of the plaudits by which he had been elevated to its summit.

But even this was not the worst effect of the imprudence of which Louvois had been guilty: the iron had yet to be driven home; and it was so; for ere long the king laid his hand upon two letters which were fated to wound him to the heart's core. One was from the Cardinal de Bouillon, containing a bitter satire on the conduct of the monarch, his government, and his person, and filled with those unpalatable truths which are never forgotten; while the other was from his daughter the Princess de Conti, who, in giving to her husband a detail of the proceedings of the court, had made use of a slighting expression towards himself.

The result of the ministerial experiment was consequently calamitous in every way. It augmented the distrust of Louis, who thenceforward never ventured to place faith in any of those by whom he was surrounded; while

it involved the temporary exile of the heedless young men who had been incautious enough to trust their ebullitions of gaiety or spleen to the sanctity of a seal. In the case of the Cardinal de Bouillon, the great almoner, a man whose age and whose profession should alike have guarded him from such an imprudence, and who was, moreover, the inveterate enemy of Louvois, the king was more severe; and he was sentenced to perpetual banishment from the court.

Nor was the young princess fated to escape unpunished. She had long been the favourite of her father; who, in his gravest moments, had always a smile to bestow upon her witty and sarcastic sallies; but on her next appearance in his presence, he turned upon her a look of cold disdain which sent her weeping to the feet of Madame de Maintenon. There, however, she found little consolation, although her crime was communicated to her; and as she still knelt, suffocating with sobs, and unable to utter a word in extenuation of her fault, she heard the low stern voice of her step-mother exclaim; "Weep, weep, Madam, for it is a great misfortune to have a bad heart."

The penance of the princess was to appear once a day before the monarch, who, although he did not address to her one word of anger or reproach, yet gazed upon her with such a sad and reproachful expression that she could better have supported the most passionate invective.[1]

This was not, however, fated to be the most serious cause of displeasure given by Madame de Conti to her royal father; for, during the campaign, an intrigue was discovered at court in which the Prince de Conti had

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

been the principal culprit, seconded by the Marshal de Luxembourg, and his son the Duke de Montmorency; and of which the princess was destined to be the first victim.

It may be remembered that before the commencement of the war, the dauphin had spent his hours of relaxation in the saloons of his handsome step-sister, and in the society of her maid of honour, where he found himself surrounded by a circle devoted to his interests; who, however, apprehensive that should they not secure the confidence of Mademoiselle Choin, they might ultimately lose that of the prince himself, devised a method by which they believed that they should definitively establish a claim upon her regard that would never be gainsaid.

M. de Luxembourg had a relative at court named Clermont, an ensign in the royal guard, who was one of the handsomest men of the day, full of courage and ambition, but limited in his resources. The marshal, anxious to push his fortunes, had introduced him to the notice of Madame de Conti, by whom he had been received with marked favour, and where he had succeeded in attracting the favourable notice of the dauphin; and it was determined that during the absence of the prince in Germany he should be informed of the great influence exerted by Mademoiselle Choin over his mind, and urged to ask her hand. The young soldier pleaded that the very circumstance which they advanced tended to render such a proceeding both onerous, and full of peril; but he was quickly re-assured by the declaration that the bond between the dauphin and the maid of honour was simply one of friendship; and that should he resolve to win her

affections and to make her his wife, he might be prepared for advancement even beyond his hopes.

M. de Clermont, poor, ambitious, and by no means unconscious of the value of court favour, listened eagerly to the specious reasoning of his friends; paid his addresses to Mademoiselle Choin, and ere long had reason to feel assured that his suit was by no means hopeless; but, unfortunately, M. de Clermont had previously devoted himself in a marked manner to the Princess de Conti; and he had no sooner proffered his hand to her maid of honour than the latter declined its acceptance upon the sole plea of his passion for her mistress. The dilemma was a difficult one. The protestations of the suitor failed to satisfy the lady; and, at length, in order to convince her of the perfect sincerity of his passion, M. de Clermont consented to place in her hands all the letters which he had received from the princess; and this pledge was no sooner given than the approval of the dauphin was solicited and obtained to an alliance by which, on his return to France, he secured the society of two persons to whom he was attached; while even the Princess de Conti declared herself gratified by the event, without suspecting that she had been betrayed.

Throughout the whole of this negotiation letters had been passing by every courier to and from the dauphin and the Prince de Conti in Germany, Luxembourg and Clermont in Flanders, and Madame de Conti and Mademoiselle Choin; and this vigorous correspondence at length attracted the attention of the king: who, suspecting some cabal, immediately adopted his usual system of detaining and examining all the letters despatched by the several parties. Thus the whole plot was revealed to him; and

shortly afterwards, a day of rain rendering him unable to take his usual exercise, immediately that he rose from table, he sent to desire that his daughter would attend him in his cabinet. Such a summons at once surprised and alarmed the princess, who was accustomed to see him only at stated hours; and it was consequently with considerable trepidation that she prepared to obey. On arriving in the outer cabinet, her lady of honour could proceed no further, and she was compelled to encounter the presence of the king alone; who had no sooner remarked her entrance than he addressed her in a tone of great severity, declaring that dissimulation would avail her nothing, for that he was aware of her correspondence with M. de Clermont; and then, without allowing her time to recover the first shock of such an announcement, he thrust his hand angrily into his pocket, and drawing out a mass of papers, demanded sternly if she recognised the writing.

The poor princess, who at once identified her letters, attempted in vain to sue for pardon, for before she could articulate a word, she fainted; a circumstance which softened the anger of the king; who having seated her in a chair, and restored her to consciousness, placed the letters in her hand; representing to her with a gentleness for which, ten minutes previously, she could not have ventured to hope, the imprudence and want of dignity of which she had rendered herself guilty by so culpable an exhibition of weakness. Madame de Conti readily admitted her fault, promised amendment, and implored to be forgiven; when the king, moved by her tears, proceeded in a still more gentle tone to assure her that this was not all; for that he had still to make known to

her how unworthily she had placed her affections, and to what a rival she had been sacrificed.

The princess gasped for breath: this was a blow for which she was utterly unprepared; and she was still struggling against the emotion it had induced, when the monarch, more in sorrow than in anger, declared his determination that she should not quit his presence until she had read aloud, not only her own letters, (which had been sacrificed to the vanity of one of her own attendants,) but also those which had subsequently passed between the affianced lovers; and which teemed with a bitter irony directed against herself.

In vain did the convulsed and mortified princess cast herself at her father's feet, drowned in tears, stifled with sobs, and scarcely able to articulate. The king had decided that she should pay the penalty of her fault; and when, still kneeling before him, she had at length completed her odious task, she buried her face in her spread hands, and gasped out the two words *pardon* and *vengeance*. The first was at once accorded; and the second was not long delayed.

An order was despatched to the Duke de Luxembourg to send M. de Clermont to the citadel of Tournay, and to direct him immediately to tender his resignation; after which he was commanded to proceed to Dauphiny, with an express understanding that he was not to leave the province. Mademoiselle Choin at the same time received instructions to retire forthwith into a convent; but, as the offending maid of honour was in possession of her secret, Madame de Conti deemed it expedient to part from her upon friendly terms, and accordingly lent her one of her own carriages to convey her to the abbey of

Port Royal at Paris; where she was constantly visited by all the members of the dauphin's court, who were well aware that the severity of the king had in no degree diminished the affection of the prince for his banished favourite.

Neither to the Prince de Conti or his noble coadjutors did the monarch, however, condescend to utter one word of reproach. Their crime had placed them under the ban of his displeasure, which was a sufficient punishment for individuals of their rank; but he forwarded a detail of the whole conspiracy to their "fat friend," as the dauphin was invariably designated throughout the correspondence, in the firm belief that such a revelation would suffice to detach him, not only from the friends who had caballed against him, but also from the lady whom he had distinguished by his preference.[1]

From 1675, when Condé resigned the command of the armies of France, until 1686, he had lived peacefully in his delicious retreat at Chantilly, where he surrounded himself with artists and men of letters. He rarely appeared at court, for, remembering the services that he had rendered to the monarch, he felt wounded by the coldness and reserve with which he was always received. In consenting to the double marriage of the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Bourbon with two of the legitimized daughters of the king, he had felt secure of overthrowing the barrier by which he had hitherto been separated from his sovereign; but the result was far from consonant to his expectations. Louis XIV. was compelled to respect Condé, and even to esteem him; but he had won the surname of Great, and

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

Louis XIV. recognised no greatness save his own. The European reputation of the conqueror of Rocroy had unfitted him for a courtier.

Shortly after the marriage of the Duchess de Bourbon she was attacked by small pox, and The Prince could not be restrained from visiting her during the progress of the disease; when the illustrious warrior whom death had so often spared upon the field of honour, fell a victim to his paternal tenderness; and carried from her chamber the poison to which he was fated to fall a victim.

On his death-bed he overcame all his resentment; and wrote to entreat the king to pardon the Prince de Conti, who had returned to France, but whom Louis had hitherto refused to restore to favour, or even to admit into his presence. When the letter was delivered, The Prince had already ceased to breathe; and the fact was no sooner made known to the king than, forgetting on his side the jealousy with which he had so long regarded him, his eyes filled with tears as he exclaimed:

"I have lost my bravest captain!"

The dying request of the hero was granted. Louis XIV. saw Conti, and pronounced his pardon; but he was not long fated to profit by his return to favour; as he died shortly afterwards from the effects of a drug incautiously administered, leaving behind him the most beautiful young widow in France.

At the close of 1679, although the palace of Versailles was not yet completed, it had already ceased to please the king. He discovered that it betrayed too much art, and displayed too little nature; and that while its dimensions were well suited to the dignity of the monarch,

they were altogether ill-fitted to the comfort of the man; and Louis XIV. was not even yet disposed to sacrifice every personal gratification to the exigences of his rank. He had, indeed, gratified his vanity by the wilderness of stone and marble that he had raised, but the very immensity of the result displeased him: and he began to sigh for a sylvan villa, or a rustic hermitage, where he might for a while escape from the perpetual *representation* to which he was condemned elsewhere.

He looked around, but he possessed no residence which satisfied this new craving; St. Germain was too old; Vincennes inconvenient; and Fontainebleau at too great a distance from the capital; when at length a site was selected near Marly, a small village on the left bank of the Seine, situated within three leagues and a half from Paris, in a valley bordered by an extensive forest. It is true that nothing could be more unpromising than the nature of the soil upon which the new palace was to be erected; for the valley was one wide marsh, which it was necessary to drain before a firm foundation could be obtained; but after the difficulties that he had overcome at Versailles, Louis XIV, to whom the retired situation of Marly appeared to offer the very advantages he sought, did not hesitate to disregard this solitary disadvantage; although it entailed great difficulties in the erection of the building, and involved an enormous outlay, which was seriously increased by the necessity of levelling a portion of the surrounding heights, in order to prevent the view from the windows from being bounded by the narrow extent of the valley itself.

Louis XIV. had commenced by desiring a hermitage in this secluded spot; but as the work advanced he

became enamoured of his own creation, and resolved that Marly should possess, as well as Versailles, its lakes, its gardens, and its park; while in order to facilitate the execution of this project, as regarded the latter palace, the celebrated hydraulic machine was forthwith commenced, destined to convey the waters of the Seine into the reservoirs of Versailles; upon whose completion the king accorded an annual pension of eight thousand livres to its inventor M. de Ville, a native of Liège.

The palace of Marly was no sooner tenantable, although still far from completed, than Louis XIV. began to make it his frequent residence; and as no one was allowed to accompany him there who was not designated by himself, a temporary abode at Marly became at once the touch-stone of royal favour, and the aim of universal ambition.

At the king's *coucher* a list was presented by one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, containing the names of the applicants for this distinction; and as they were slowly pronounced, Louis XIV. answered by a gesture of dissent where he was not disposed to accord so high a honour; suffering such as he approved to pass without remark, and indicating others whom he desired to oblige.

The motive of the monarch for this arrangement was stated to have been his wish to exclude Madame de Montespan, who, at the commencement of these pilgrimages to the hermitage at Marly had not yet left the court; while the fact that she was twice permitted to visit the new palace was attributed to the influence of Madame de Maintenon, who, from the circumstance of her own position not being at that period perfectly assured, was not willing to incur the responsibility of

an indignation, which would have exhausted its bitterness upon herself.

The idea of the edifice, or rather collection of edifices, which composed the royal rêtreat of Marly, was as convenient as it was singular. The centre and principal building consisted of an immense square pavilion detached on all sides, near which were grouped six others of smaller dimensions. The main construction was ornamented on the exterior by Corinthian columns, between which were painted in fresco trophies, heroic allegories, and devices from the designs of le Brun. The building had four fronts, each crowned by a projecting triangular portico; and the landings of the terrace-like steps, which were situated in the angles and along the several faces of the edifice, were ornamented by sixteen groups of children, and eight sphinxes in bronze, the production of a young sculptor named Coustou.[1]

These steps led to four vestibules which acted as entrances to the four suites of apartments on the ground floor, reserved for the monarch and the princes of the blood, all communicating with the Great Saloon; which was of octagonal form, having four fire-places; and was

[1] Nicholas Coustou, who was born at Lyons in 1658, studied under his uncle Coysevox, and at twenty-three years of age carried off the principal prize from the Academy of Sculpture. It was in Rome that he executed his fine statue of the Emperor Commodus as Hercules, now at Versailles. Four of the figures in the gardens of the Tuileries are also by his hand; the *Julius Cæsar*, two *Venuses*, and the *Hunter*, seated beneath a tree with his dog at his feet; as well as a group typifying the *Seine* and the *Marne*. The *chef d'œuvre* of Coustou is, however, his Descent from the Cross, known as the *Vow of Louis XIII*, which adorns the choir of Nôtre-Dame. Nicholas Coustou died in 1733.

supported by Ionic pillars, above which were painted figures representing the Seasons. Four spacious windows, with gilded balconies, and four oriels surrounded by garlands of flowers, supported by Cupids, gave light to this magnificent apartment; and in front of the building extended a vast esplanade, known as the *amphitheatre,* ornamented by fourteen costly vases.

The lesser pavilions were appropriated to the royal guests, two of whom were accommodated in each building; and as it was understood that the husband of every lady who had received an invitation was expected to bear her company, the temporary *chez soi* of Marly was frequently more domestic and stringent to many of the courtiers than that of their own hôtels in the capital; while all individuals, of whatever sex, found in the apartments destined to them every article, both of use and luxury, which could be exacted either by comfort or refinement.

This villa-palace was approached by a superb avenue of trees, and its park extended to the boundaries of that of Versailles. An iron grating of elaborate workmanship enclosed the circular court, on either side of which stretched away the spacious stables; the gardens were designed by Durusé, and were celebrated for their artistic arrangement; but the gems of Marly were its miniature lakes and graceful fountains, of which the quality of the water was esteemed as above price. The finest work of Coustou enriched one of these noble sheets of water, which was known as the Fountain of the Winds: the group consists of an aged man leaning upon an urn, and representing the Ocean, while the Mediterranean is typified by a graceful woman with her child by her side,

whose arm is flung across that of the principal figure, to designate the canal of Languedoc.

Such was ultimately the "hermitage" of Marly, where Louis XIV. originally declared that he desired simply a modest villa in which he might pass a few days in retirement, with half-a-dozen chosen courtiers, and a limited retinue; but where he ultimately sunk large sums of money, not only in permanent creations, but also in passing caprices and puerile conceits. Large trees were transported from the forests of Fontainebleau and Compiègne at an enormous cost, only to add by the rich shadows of their foliage to the enjoyment of some rural fête, and afterwards to wither where they stood, or to give place to others. Nor was this the only change undergone by the grounds of Marly; for a courtier, exiled for a time from this exclusive retreat, was sure to find on his return, groves and bowers where he had left sheets of water and foaming cascades, and fountains whose basins teemed with gold fish, and glittered with the floating lotus, where he had previously sauntered beneath the leafy gloom of forest-trees, or gathered exotic flowers for "the lady of his thoughts."

Let it not be supposed, however, that while Marly underwent these extraordinary and meaningless changes, the more regal pile of Versailles was suffered to remain uncompleted. We have already alluded elsewhere to the magnificence alike of its external and internal arrangements, and the resolute expenditure of both human life and national treasure by which every difficulty had been gradually overcome. Originally Versailles had boasted neither wood, water, generous soil, nor noble prospects; half marsh and half sand, the adjacent land had appeared

to defy alike the art and the labour of man; but these unpromising materials had been cemented by human blood and human sweat; and the rarest blossoms and the goodliest timber learned to thrive under such costly forcing; while the empty reservoirs and gasping fountains, whence the waters evaporated or drained away, despite every exertion, were ultimately fed to repletion by the hydraulic machine of Marly.

Many millions had indeed been swallowed up by this gigantic work; and the shades of the thousands who had perished under the task might hover around its walls, and shriek out their wail of bitterness through its echoing galleries: but Versailles was resting proudly on its foundations, and already presenting to admiring Europe the noblest monument of the reign of Louis XIV.

CHAPTER IX.

LEAGUE OF AUGSBURG—INTRIGUE OF LOUVOIS—FIRST CAMPAIGN OF THE DAUPHIN—BURNING OF THE PALATINATE—DESTRUCTION OF THE FRENCH FLEET—THE UPHOLSTERER OF NÔTRE DAME—GALLANTRY OF THE DUKE DE CHARTRES—PERSECUTION OF THE CALVINISTS—DEATH OF THE ABBÉ DE CHAYLA—NEGOTIATION—DEATH OF THE DAUPHINESS—THE CONVENT OF ST. CYR—RACINE'S ESTHER—JEALOUSY OF THE PRINCESSES—PROPOSED MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE DE CHARTRES—INSOLENCE OF LOUVOIS—THE FIRE-TONGS—NATIONAL APPREHENSIONS—LIBERALITY OF THE CITIES—ROYAL PLATE SENT TO THE MINT—DECLINING INFLUENCE OF LOUVOIS—HIS DEATH—INDIFFERENCE OF THE KING—THE ROYAL MESSAGE—SUSPICIONS OF POISON.

REVERT we now to the war threatened by Louvois after the adventure of the Trianon.

The league of Augsburg had already been formed at the instigation of the Prince of Orange; but although numerous rumours as regarded its purpose and extent had, from time to time, reached the French court, nothing was definitively known until 1687, and Louis XIV. had

made no preparations for so widely extended and menacing a war. He was still, as we have shewn, exhausting his finances in the erection of palaces, and in the acquisition of luxuries from all quarters of the globe; and it is possible that Louvois, anxious to avoid a collision with the other European powers, while an intestine struggle was wasting the southern provinces of the kingdom, would have devised some expedient for averting so great a peril, had not the footrule of le Nôtre been applied to the window of the Trianon; but the ill-omened pertinacity of the king upon that occasion suddenly changed his views. He felt the necessity of self-preservation, for he saw that his influence was on the wane; and he forthwith proceeded to secure the election of the Cardinal de Furstemberg to the archbishopric of Cologne, in opposition to the interests of Bavaria, which was the natural ally of France; conscious that by so doing he must provoke the hostilities he had lately deprecated.

This act accomplished, he continued to pursue the war in the most cruel and determined manner, deluging the whole Palatinate in flame and blood, and leaving William of Orange free to pursue his projects upon England; thence he carried it into Italy, where he treated the Duke of Savoy with so much indignity, without the cognizance of Louis XIV, that he in turn threw himself into the ranks of the general enemy;[1] and with the assistance of Austria, which sent him a force of four thousand men under the command of Prince Eugene, the Duke Amédée recommenced that wild war amid mountains and ravines

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

which was so congenial alike to the nature of his territory, and the peculiarity of his genius; while the prince forced the French to raise the siege of Coni, and the Duke of Bavaria arriving with a reinforcement, compelled them to recross the Alps.

It was on this occasion that the name of Prince Eugene became known in Paris as that of a soldier. On his return from the campaign against the Turks, he had solicited from Louis XIV. the command of a regiment, which was coldly refused; and he had then addressed a letter to the king, wherein he stated, that as His Majesty rejected the proffer of his services, he was about to tender them to the Emperor of Germany. This letter afforded a theme of jest to the monarch, who, on the same evening gave it into the hands of the Marshal de Villeroi at the card-table, demanding; "Does it not strike you that I am about to sustain a great loss?" to which question the marshal, little anticipating the annoyance to which he was subsequently to be exposed by the young prince, answered, in as light and supercilious a tone.

William of Orange still occupied Texel when the French army, amounting to a hundred thousand men, were marched upon Germany, under the command of the dauphin; who, on this occasion, made his first campaign; and in default of Condé, now in his grave, and of Créqui, who had also died in the course of the preceding year, Henry de Durfort, Marshal de Duras,[1]

[1] James Henry de Durfort, Duke de Duras was the descendant of a noble family of Guyenne, and the nephew of Turenne; and was appointed Governor of Franche-Comté, and Marshal of France in 1675. After commanding the army in Germany, he was named captain of the body-guard, and died in 1704. His estate of Duras,

was appointed second in command; the Generals Catinat[1] and Vauban, and several others of less repute serving under his orders. The dauphin had, at this period, attained his twenty-seventh year; and as this was the first occasion upon which he had been permitted to assert himself as the heir of a great kingdom, he received the command with a joy which he did not attempt to disguise. At the moment of his departure, when he was about to take leave of his royal father in the presence of the whole court, Louis XIV. thus addressed him:

"My son, in thus sending you to command my troops, I afford to you an opportunity of making known your value. Go, then, and show it to the whole of Europe, in order that when I shall be no more, none may be able to perceive that the king is dead."

The prince received a special commission to command, as though he had been simply a general officer chosen

was erected into a duchy in 1685. His son became also a marshal of France, and was appointed to the command of the national guard at the commencement of the revolution. His grandson, who was first gentleman of the king's chamber, was compelled to fly his country in order to save his life. He returned, however, under Buonaparte, and was appointed by Louis XVIII. adjutant-general and peer of France. His wife, who was the daughter of the Count de Kersaint, was celebrated by her novels of *Aurika* and *Edward*.

[1] Nicholas de Catinat was born in Paris in 1637. He abandoned the bar for the army, and in 1667 was appointed to a lieutenancy in the guards. He distinguished himself in several engagements, and on being promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general in 1688, he possessed himself of the whole of Savoy, and a part of Piedmont; while in Flanders he behaved with equal gallantry. Having been appointed Marshal of France in 1693, and the war having recommenced in 1701, he was entrusted with the command of the army in Italy, against Prince Eugene, who commanded that of the Germanic empire. He died in 1712.

by the sovereign; and the letters of his royal father were addressed, "To my son the Dauphin, my Lieutenant-General, commanding my Army in Germany." Every precaution had, moreover, been taken to secure him from the mortification of personal failure; for although he lent his name and his presence to the expedition, Marshal Duras really commanded the troops; Boufflers[1] was at the head of a body of men on the French bank of the Rhine, and the Marshal d'Humières at that of another in the direction of Cologne. Heidelburg and Mayence were soon taken; and the siege of Philipsbourg, always a necessary prelude whenever France declared war against Germany, was commenced, under the direction of Vauban. The dauphin joined the army on the sixth day after the opening of the trenches; and brave without temerity, affable to those by whom he was approached, and liberal and indulgent to the troops, he soon gained the affection of the whole army. Philipsbourg was taken, after a resistance of nineteen days: Manheim only held out during four; Franckendal surrendered in two; while Spire, Trèves, Worms, and Oppenheim opened their gates without a struggle.

Such was the progress of the French arms when the famous order, signed by Louvois, reached the royal camp, that the Palatinate was to be reduced to cinders, and the whole face of the country turned into a desert. There was no possibility of resisting the command, iniquitous and impolitic as it was; and, accordingly, the

[1] Louis-Francis, Duke de Boufflers, and marshal of France, afterwards immortalized himself by the defence of Lille in 1708, and contributed greatly to the success of several engagements. He died in 1711, and it was said of him that *his heart died the last.*

French generals, in the very heart of the winter, announced to the citizens in their flourishing and handsome towns, to the inhabitants of the villages, and to the owners of more than fifty stately castles, that they must forthwith quit their dwellings, which were about to become the prey of the flames. Men, women, and children consequently found themselves houseless; and while one portion of these unhappy victims of cruelty and ambition were wandering over the country in search of shelter, and others were escaping to find an asylum in exile, the troops, who, on such occasions, excited by the destruction of their own hands, invariably exceed the orders of their superiors, burnt and pillaged the whole face of the country. Manheim, the residence of the electors, fell first; its palaces were destroyed, and the dwellings of its citizens lay in one ruined heap around them; its tombs were desecrated by the rapacity of the soldiery, who anticipated that they contained treasure; and the ashes which they had so long enshrined were scattered to the winds of heaven.

So long as Colbert lived, Louis XIV. had never openly persecuted the Protestants, for that great minister had succeeded in convincing him that they were one powerful prop to the prosperity of his kingdom; and neither Madame de Maintenon nor Père la Chaise had ventured to put forth an adverse argument, for the mastery of mind on the side of Colbert was too unequivocal to admit the faintest prospect of success in such a struggle; while to every attempt made by Bossuet and Fénelon to undermine the interests of those whom they denominated "Huguenots," he contented himself by replying, "Gentlemen, you are now following the promptings of

your Sorbonne conscience; but you have another; and if you will suffer it to be heard it will argue differently."

Colbert was now, however, no more; and intolerance and blood-thirstiness had replaced mercy and sound judgment.

This was the second occasion upon which Louis XIV. had carried destruction into the heart of this fair country; but the flames by which Turenne had consumed two towns, and twenty villages of the Palatinate, were a mere bonfire beside the present conflagration. All Europe looked on in horror; and the officials, by whom it was carried into execution, blushed at the enormities of which they were the agents.

Louis XIV. had authorized this cruelty in his voluptuous palace, surrounded by all the luxuries of wealth, and all the consciousness of power; his gilded apartments gave back no echo of the heart-wrung groans of a whole province, rendered destitute by his will; his painted ceilings admitted no view of the houseless and ruined thousands to whom he had made the future one period of bitter trial. But although he could not witness the effects of his egotistical ambition, he was fated to feel their results in the hatred and execration of all the European nations, who openly condemned alike his harshness and his impolicy.

This fearful war did not, however, cause the French monarch to forget or to neglect the pledge which he had given to James II.; and it was while his troops were following up their career of victory in Germany, that he equipped the fleet intended to convey an army of twenty thousand men to England, and to effect the restoration of the exiled sovereign. The failure of this expe-

dition, which destroyed for ever the hopes of the last Stuart, was the first check that the power of Louis XIV. had ever received upon the high seas; and the mortification was comparatively great; while it was by the light of the flames kindled in the Palatinate that William of Orange, who had already established himself firmly upon the throne of his father-in-law, crossed the channel to attack the French troops upon the very spot where he had first opposed them. He had already proved himself no contemptible adversary, and his purpose was no sooner ascertained than it was consequently found necessary to oppose him by a general of equal talent; when the choice of the king fell upon the Marshal de Luxembourg; who, having incurred the jealousy of Louvois, as Turenne had previously done, had been for several years unemployed.

In this campaign the marshal acquired the title of the Upholsterer of Notre Dame, from the fact of his having captured at the battle of Fleurus, two hundred of the enemy's standards, which he hastened to forward to the capital; and, during its continuance, it was rendered famous by the sieges of Mons and Namur, commanded by the king in person; and the battles of Steinkirk and Neerwinden, when the Duke de Chartres, the son of *Monsieur*, then only in his fifteenth year, commenced his military career in a manner which gave brilliant earnest of his future reputation.

But it was not only against these external wars that France had now to contend. The intestinal struggle in which she was engaged, was also mining her strength. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was bearing its fruits; and the flames of the Palatinate had extended to the Cevennes. The Abbé de Chayla had proved faithful

to his principles, and had pursued the work of proselytism with a fatal energy suited to his character. He had torn children from their parents, and shut them up in monastic houses, where they were subjected to such frightful penances, in expiation, (as they were told,) of the heresy of their relatives, that they had in many cases expired under their sufferings. Nor would he even afford to the dying the happiness of passing away in peace and prayer; but haunted their beds of death with prophecies of everlasting perdition should they not recant their errors, and become converts to the Romish faith; and threats that after they had ceased to breathe, their bodies should be dragged upon hurdles to the common sewers of the city, there to find a grave.

But as many, despite all his exertions, were discovered to have evaded his horrible denunciations, and found asylums where they could spend their last few hours of life unagonized by his fearful visitations, he proclaimed a sentence of lèze-majesté against all who should harbour heretics, under whatever circumstances; and thus closed many a door which would have been piously opened to their necessities.

Both within and without, the kingdom of France was like a huge vampire battening in blood; and the arch-priest, or rather arch-fiend Chayla, was so conscious that his own martyrdom must inevitably follow those of his victims, that while he was ruthlessly pursuing his career of murder, he was at the same time preparing his tomb in the church of St. Germain. Every day was marked by new arrests, by new tortures, or by some execution; but the individuals he persecuted the most rigorously, were the alleged prophets, whom he denounced

as the fomenters of the heresy. One of these preachers was burned at Montpellier, and another was hanged; while a third, named Laquoite, who was to have been broken on the wheel, disappeared from his prison on the night preceding his intended punishment, without leaving a trace of the means by which his liberation had been accomplished.

A rumour immediately spread that, like St. Peter, he had been led invisibly from his dungeon; and ere long he re-appeared, preaching a crusade against the Abbé de Chayla, whom he denounced as the Anti-christ; when, all who had been the victims of the fanatic and bloodthirsty missionary, and all whom he had bereft alike of their parents and of their children, assembled beneath his banner; and under the command of a blacksmith named Laporte, and Esprit Seguier, (who after Laquoite himself was the most revered of the twenty or thirty prophets or preachers of the Protestants,) marched upon the abbey of Montvert, where Chayla had taken up his residence. They were all armed with scythes, halberds, or swords; while a few among them also carried guns and pistols.

The abbé was in his oratory when, despite the order which he had given that he was never to be disturbed in his devotions, one of his servants rushed into the apartment to warn him that a party of fanatics were descending the mountain; but, believing it to be a mere attempt to deliver certain prisoners whom he had consigned to the dungeons of the abbey, he contented himself by desiring the officer of his guard to march out at the head of his men, and disperse the heretics. The latter had, however, no sooner ascertained the strength

of the enemy, than, instead of risking a collision, he found that he had better prepare for a defence; and, accordingly, causing the gates of the abbey to be closed, he posted his men in the rear of a barricade, hastily formed under an arch which led to the apartments of the arch-priest. These preparations were scarcely terminated, when the outer gate was driven in, and the reformers burst into the court, demanding the immediate restoration of the prisoners; to which vociferous summons the abbé replied by an order to fire upon the besiegers.

As it was obeyed, one of the reformers fell dead, and two others were grievously wounded; but this spectacle only increased the fury of their companions, who instantly precipitated themselves upon the barricade, which they, ere long, overthrew, under the directions of Laporte and Esprit Seguier; one of whom had to avenge the death of his father, and the other that of his son, both executed by order of their common enemy; whereupon the soldiers retreated for refuge to a lower hall, situated immediately beneath the chamber in which the abbé was engaged in prayer with his followers. During the attack the Protestants had lost two of their number, and had five others wounded; when their two chiefs, fearing a further sacrifice of life, and apprehending a resistance as desperate as their own attack, proposed the release of the prisoners, and the subsequent burning of the abbey.

A portion of the besieging force accordingly set forth to discover the prisons of their co-religionists, while the remainder kept guard over the issues of the building, to prevent the escape of its inhabitants; nor were they long engaged in these duties, for the captives having surmised

from the unusual turmoil that deliverance was at hand, shouted aloud to guide the steps of their friends to the dungeon in which they were incarcerated. The sight of these unhappy victims was well calculated to increase the frenzy of the assailants. They were, as we have elsewhere stated, six in number; three young men, and three girls of tender age, who had been apprehended in the attempt to make their escape from France. They had already passed eight days in their frightful prison, where their legs were inserted as human wedges between the sides of a cleft beam, the bones crushed, and the limbs disabled; their bodies swollen with agony, and their physical and mental powers alike prostrate. In this miserable state they were borne from their dungeons, amid cries of fire! fire! and ere many seconds had elapsed, every inflammable substance of which the besiegers could avail themselves, was cast into a heap, and ignited by means of a straw bed, which they discovered in the guard-room.

This death-pile had no sooner began to affect the flooring of the upper chamber, than the abbé endeavoured to escape from the window, by the assistance of his sheets, which, firmly knotted together, were secured by his attendants; but these proving too short, he was compelled to leap the remainder of the distance, in doing which one of his legs was broken, and he barely retained sufficient strength to crawl behind a buttress, where he endeavoured to conceal himself. The attempt proved, however, unsuccessful; for the flames, as they gathered in volume, soon betrayed him to his enemies, who rushed towards him in a body, exclaiming, "Death to the archpriest! death to the executioner!" In vain did Esprit

Seguier, who, at this awful moment, felt his vengeance yield before the frightful peril of the destined victim, shout to his followers to spare his life, in the name of that God who wills rather the repentance than the death of a sinner; they were, for the first time, deaf to his exhortations, and answered only with cries of vengeance. Seguier, however, persisted in his work of mercy; and, bestriding the body of Chayla, declared that his life should be spared if he would instantly recant his past heresies; and thenceforth devote himself to the propagation of the faith.

The abbé answered only by a disdainful negative; and Seguier was compelled to abandon him to his fate.

The first blow which reached him was dealt by the hand of Laporte, who, as he drove his poignard to the hilt in his body, reminded him of his father, whom he had consigned to the flames at Nismes. The arch-priest did not utter a sound, but a stream of blood which issued from his breast proclaimed that the wound was deep and serious: the weapon was then transferred to Seguier, who, in his turn struck, calling upon the name of his son, who had been broken on the wheel at Montpellier. Even his aim was not, however, mortal; although a second stream of blood gushed from beneath the flowing garments of the abbé, the voice of whose murmured prayer became audibly more feeble; and then a third approached and seized the dagger, invoking the memory of his brother, who had been put to death in chains; and this time the steel entered the heart of the wretched man, who fell forward upon the earth, and expired.

But the work of vengeance was even then incomplete;

and as he lay, a bleeding mass before them, the weapon was passed from hand to hand; while, as it was successively buried in his body, each who struck cursed him in the name of a martyred relative; until two and fifty stabs had almost obliterated in his remains every trace of their previous humanity.[1]

After so frightful a catastrophe as this the Calvinists had no longer a hope of mercy; and the war of extermination proceeded with various success, until the year 1704, when it was terminated by a negotiation between the Marshal de Villars, and its then chief, the celebrated Jean Cavalier.

Meanwhile the French court had become less and less attractive. The dauphiness had been spared the knowledge of the ruin of her country by a melancholy death; finally attributed to the fact of her having been visited by the Princess de Conti, at the birth of the Duke de Berri, so excessively perfumed, that she was unable to contend against the effects of the overcharged atmosphere. Her loss excited little regret, either in the king or her husband, who had long ceased to interest themselves in one whose secluded habits offered them neither excitement nor pleasure; and she was no sooner consigned to an early grave than she was forgotten.

As we have already stated, Louis XIV. had ceased to encourage literary talent, or to attend theatrical representations; and it was destined to be the convent of St. Cyr which renewed the taste for intellectual pursuits. Madame de Maintenon, more and more embarrassed to discover some method of entertaining a monarch whose

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

powers of enjoyment were visibly waning, at length bethought herself of requesting Racine, who had forsaken the stage for Port-Royal and the court, to write a sacred tragedy, which might be represented by her pupils.

The poet accordingly produced *Esther*, which has always been regarded as an allegory, wherein the triumph of Madame de Maintenon over the Marquise de Montespan, was shadowed forth in that of the humble Israelite and the pious Mordecai, over the haughty Vashti and the impious Haman; and after this tragedy had been rehearsed in the convent, it was finally enacted on several occasions before the king at Versailles, in the winter of 1689; when prelates and Jesuits alike sought permission to witness so extraordinary a spectacle, in which the talent of the performers, their beauty, and their grace, proved even more attractive than the genius of the great dramatist.

Even these amusements, however, could not compensate to the king for the constant annoyance to which he was exposed by the perpetual dissensions of his three daughters, who appeared to have inherited the same feelings of rivalry that had previously existed between la Vallière and Madame de Montespan. At Marly, the king and the dauphin both dined at the same hour, and in the same apartment; and the ladies of the court seated themselves as they pleased at either table, with the exception that the Princess de Conti was always at that of MONSEIGNEUR, while the two other princesses were placed at that of the monarch. Madame de Maintenon also dined at the latter, where she occupied a seat opposite to Louis XIV; and on one occasion it chanced that the king, despite his usual gravity,

amused himself at the close of the repast by playing at forfeits for olives with the Duchess de Bourbon, which caused her to drink several draughts of wine more than usual, the king also affecting to do the same. The Princess de Conti, whose jealousy was excited by this playfulness, could not conceal her chagrin; and when the party rose from table, as the king was passing her, he was so much displeased by the expression of her countenance, that he drily remarked, that her seriousness was doubtless intended to rebuke their intemperance, after which he left the room; and he had no sooner retired than the Princess de Conti, enraged at the rebuke, made a bitter comment upon certain prolonged suppers, in which her sisters had latterly indulged; upon which Mademoiselle de Blois, in her low and languishing voice, replied by a rejoinder so stinging, that the princess was for the moment silenced.

The prolonged repasts with which the princesses had thus been publicly taunted were, indeed, little suited either to their rank or their sex; for when wearied by the gravity and etiquette of the court circle, they were accustomed to celebrate a species of orgie in their own apartments, after the supper; and on one occasion when the dauphin had at a late hour quitted the card-table, and hearing a noise in their quarter of the palace, entered to ascertain its cause, he found them engaged in smoking, and discovered that they had borrowed their pipes from the officers of the Swiss guard. He immediately broke up the party; but the adventure reached the ears of the king; who on the following day expressed his displeasure in no measured terms, to the great delight of the Princess de Conti, who thus triumphed in her

turn; but Louis XIV, wearied by these scenes of folly and recrimination, at length threatened to banish them all from the court; and, alarmed by the menace, peace was apparently restored.[1]

The establishment of his legitimized daughters had ever been a subject of great anxiety to the king; and having succeeded in introducing the two elder into the houses of Conti and Condé, he became desirous of marrying the third to the Duke de Chartres, his own and only nephew, who ranked above all the other princes of the blood; but he remembered the comments which had been made upon the two former alliances, and was thus enabled to estimate the difficulties which must naturally attend the accomplishment of one still more startling. He was well aware also of the jealousy with which *Monsieur* insisted on all the prerogatives and privileges of his rank, and his repugnance to everything that tended to render them less absolute; while he was equally conscious that *Madame* belonged to a nation which regarded unequal marriages with abhorrence, and was of a character well calculated to resist a measure, by which she would not fail to consider her son dishonoured. Nevertheless, the resolution of the king was taken; and during the space of four years he prepared his measures to secure the success of this darling scheme.

Meanwhile Louvois, not satisfied with having burned and sacked Manheim, Worms, and Spires, proposed to Louis XIV. the destruction of Treves also, which, as he alleged, could be easily converted by the enemy into a fortified place; but the monarch was by this time satiated with blood, and refused to comply with the suggestion;

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

and the minister had no sooner quitted the room than Madame de Maintenon, arousing in favour of the Bavarians the religious scruples which she had laid to sleep during the persecutions in the Cevennes, warmly supported the resolution of the king, and expatiated upon the enormity of a vengeance which involved the innocent as well as the guilty; reminding him that although these extreme measures had emanated from the minister, all the obloquy had hitherto fallen upon himself.

She could have advanced no other argument so powerful as this; for Louis was above all things tenacious of his perfectibility, and consequently ill-constituted to bear the odium of another's acts; and thus, although he listened in silence, Madame de Maintenon felt that her point was gained.

Louvois had not insisted strongly on his iniquitous purpose when he saw the monarch disinclined to yield; but as pertinacity was a marked feature in his character, and that he had long discovered the power of firmness over the mind of Louis XIV, who, alike from indolence and indecision, generally suffered himself to be swayed by those about him, he resolved to maintain his position; and accordingly, when, after the lapse of a few days, he had again transacted business in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and was about to retire, he informed the king, while restoring his papers to his portfolio, that having been convinced, when on a former occasion he had suggested to His Majesty the burning of Treves, that he had simply negatived a measure of such undeniable necessity from a religious scruple, he had taken the act upon his own responsibility, as well as upon his own conscience; and had despatched a courier

to the seat of war, with an order for the immediate destruction of the city.

The lips of the king quivered with passion as the audacious minister thus braved him to his face; and by a sudden impulse he seized the fire-tongs which were lying near him, and would inevitably have struck him, had not Madame de Maintenon with great presence of mind sprung between them, and torn the weapon from his hands.

While she was thus engaged Louvois rapidly prepared to leave the room; but before he could reach the door, the king, still trembling with indignation, commanded him instantly to despatch a second messenger to countermand the order which he had given; adding that should his courier arrive too late, and that a single house had fallen a prey to the flames, his head should be the forfeit of his disobedience.

The crest-fallen minister apparently hastened to obey, but the messenger of whom he had spoken was still awaiting the issue of the conference, even Louvois himself having hesitated to incur so heavy a responsibility without the royal sanction, which he had adopted so dangerous a method to enforce; and he was consequently despatched without the fatal order, leaving the king fully persuaded that his diligence alone could ensure the preservation of Treves.[1]

Ere long Louis XIV, as well as the whole of his subjects, began to entertain serious apprehensions as regarded the termination of a war which had commenced under such favourable auspices. On all sides he saw either declared

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

enemies or doubtful allies; while his army, although sufficiently strong to sustain any ordinary hostilities, was unequal to cope with the united forces of Europe; and the new levies were raised too slowly to supply the deficiency.[1] The treasury, exhausted by the public buildings, and other expenses incident upon them, was so deficient that it became necessary, even at the commencement of the war, to discover some expedient by which to ensure supplies; and for this purpose offices under the government were invented, which were imposed upon the most opulent of the citizens; and for which they were compelled to pay an exorbitant price. The cities also contributed largely. Toulouse set the example, by making a donation of a hundred thousand crowns; Rouen followed with the same sum; Paris tendered four hundred thousand francs: and many others contributed in the same proportion.

The king received all the deputations authorized to present these offerings with an affability and condescension which sufficiently testified their necessity; and, in his turn, sent to the mint all the valuable pieces of massive silver furniture which had adorned not only the gallery and state-rooms of Versailles, but even the private apartments; and which had so long excited the wonder and admiration of all its foreign visitors. Nothing was retained; but, great as was the sacrifice, its proceeds were far from presenting an equivalent; all these precious articles, wrought with a skill that formed their principal value, and which had been purchased by an outlay of millions, producing merely the price of the metal of which they

[1] Mémoires de Madame de la Fayette.

had been composed; while the publicity of the measure only served to excite the railleries of the common enemy, and to encourage continued hostility towards a nation, so soon compelled to resort to such an expedient.[1]

The influence of Louvois was, meanwhile, perceptibly on the wane; and a second adventure sufficed to lose him for ever the estimation and favour of the king. In the spring of 1691, Louis XIV. formed the project of besieging Mons, and had decided that the ladies of the court should accompany him in the expedition; but the minister entered a formal protest against this arrangement, asserting, that at such a crisis, it was an expence which could not prudently be contemplated; and the king, deeply mortified alike by the opposition and its declared cause, was compelled to yield. It was at this siege that Louvois committed the last imprudence which was fated to fill up the measure of his disgrace.

As the king was inspecting the outposts, he remarked a cavalry picquet which he considered to be injudiciously placed, and of which he accordingly changed the position; when in the course of the same day, chancing to repass the spot, he found it once more stationed at the very point from which he had removed it in the morning; and indignant at so palpable a disrespect to his orders, he inquired of the officer in command, who had authorized him to return to his original post?

He was informed that it was M. de Louvois, who had marched the picquet back an hour previously.

The next question of the king was, whether M. de Louvois was aware that it was His Majesty himself

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

who had posted his men in a new position; and the reply was affirmative.

"Is this his business?" exclaimed the king angrily; "He believes himself to be a great warrior, and to know everything." And then with an authoritative gesture, he commanded the picquet to return to the spot where he had himself posted them.

Although Louvois was ignorant of all the motives of displeasure which the monarch harboured against him, he soon became convinced that his ruin had been determined. He felt that the thunderbolt was about to fall. "I know not," he exclaimed to a friend; "if he will content himself by dismissing me from office, or if he purposes to condemn me to a prison; and I care not what his decision may be, when once I have ceased to hold the reins of government." In vain did his confident endeavour to reassure him, by recalling to his memory that he had, during the last ten years, repeated the same apprehension at least a score of times. "I may have done so;" was the melancholy reply; "but now all is changed. We have a hundred times had bitter altercations, and I have left his cabinet when he has been angry and excited, yet, on the following day I have found him calm and courteous. It is so no longer; for the last fortnight his brow has never been without a frown. He has made up his mind to sacrifice me."[1]

Weighed down by this conviction, Louvois became broken in mind, and weakened in body. A slow fever fastened upon him, and he was soon quite incapable of concealing his uneasiness. The Maréchale de Rochefort

[1] Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Louis XIV, par l'Abbé de Choisy.

and Madame de Blanzac, two of his most intimate friends, having paid him a visit at Meudon, he proposed in the course of the day to drive them out; and while so engaged, they heard him talking earnestly to himself; and at several intervals caught the words; "Will he do it? Will they make him do it? No, no. Nevertheless, —No; he dare not."

During this monologue the mother and daughter, who listened in silence, were suddenly startled by perceiving that the horses were on the very edge of a piece of water into which they were about to plunge; and the Maréchale had only time to seize the reins, and to utter a piercing shriek, in order to arouse the minister from his reverie, and warn him of the danger to which they were exposed, when he turned towards his affrighted companions with a melancholy smile, confessing that he had been so buried in thought that he had entirely forgotten the duty in which he was engaged.

Finally, on the 16th of June 1691, his fate was determined. He had, on the 14th, transacted business as usual with the king, in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, when another stormy scene took place. Louis XIV., who still remembered and resented with great bitterness the burning of the Palatinate, and who had by no means forgotten the still more personal offence of the displaced picquet, made no effort to conceal his resentment; but thwarted in every instance the projects of his minister, and opposed his opinions so determinedly, that the patience of Louvois at length gave way; and suddenly throwing upon the table a packet of papers which he chanced at the moment to hold in his hand, he rushed

from the room exclaiming, "It is impossible to serve you."

When he reached home the war-secretary abandoned himself to the most gloomy despair. The first furious ebullition of his royal master might have been the mere impulsive effect of temporary passion; but the persevering verbal indignity to which he had been that day subjected, was too systematic to admit of any such misconception. Ambition was the one ruling passion of his life; he cared not for the mental labour or the moral responsibility entailed upon him by the difficult and onerous office which he held; he forgot all in a sense of the power that it conferred; and he felt that in losing place, he lost all for which he cared to live.

At eleven o'clock on the same night the heart-broken minister received a private letter from Madame de Maintenon, in which she assured him that the king had consented to overlook his impetuosity, and that he was at liberty to present himself as usual on the following day in the council chamber; a permission of which he gladly availed himself; when, as he had been assured, Louis XIV. met him without a vestige of displeasure, and addressed him almost with a smile. Louvois, however, was too well acquainted with the secret thoughts and lip-deep policy of his royal master to be so easily misled. For five-and-twenty years he had been accustomed to study, not only his words, but also his looks; and the very calmness of the king upon this occasion, when he had so recently been subjected to an affront from a subject, sufficed to convince the minister that his influence and his power were at an end for ever, and that even his person was not secure.

At the termination of the council he retired at once to his residence, which he reached on foot; and where he had no sooner arrived than he commanded that the Marquis de Barbesieux, his son, might be desired to follow him to his chamber. In five minutes the summons was obeyed, but it was too late, for when the marquis entered the room, his father had already expired.

The impression of Louvois had, however, been a correct one; for his arrest on the succeeding day, and his imprisonment in the Bastille, had already been determined on.[1]

When the death of his minister was announced to Louis XIV. he was about to visit his fountains; but he had no sooner received this intelligence, than he began to walk rapidly to and fro in his apartment, uttering from time to time a few incoherent words, and on one occasion exclaiming hoarsely; "The wretched man must have dreaded the fate of Fouquet!" drawing, as he spoke, a paper from his bosom, which he tore into a thousand fragments. Some of these were collected, and afterwards joined together by the care and skill of a curious courtier, when they proved, as he had anticipated, to be portions of a *lettre de cachet*, bearing the name of the offending minister.

Pale, thoughtful, and agitated, the king was about to descend into the gardens, when a gentleman of the household of James II. who had been hastily despatched from St. Germain for that purpose, approached him, and in the name of his master offered a compliment of

[1] This fact was communicated by the king himself to Monsieur de Chamillard, by whom it was repeated to the Duke de St. Simon.

condolence on the loss which he had so suddenly experienced.

"Sir;" said the monarch, in an accent of which the cheerfulness admitted no mistake; "make my acknowledgments to the king and queen of England, and assure them in my name that neither their interests nor my own will suffer from the circumstance."

As the messenger was retiring, His Majesty beckoned to M. de Lauzun who chanced to be passing, and invited him to become his companion in a saunter through the park; when as he traversed the orangery, evidently overwhelmed by thought, he suddenly raised his eyes towards that wing of the palace in which the minister had just expired; and the window of the death-room being open, continued for a considerable time to gaze earnestly in that direction; until a strange expression passed over his countenance, and bending towards his companion, he whispered in his ear with a constrained smile; "Just see the force of imagination; I could have declared that I recognised in the distance the face of M. de Louvois!"

During the evening, however, Louis XIV. recovered his composure; and no allusion was made in his presence to the fatal event which had so recently occurred, until the advent of *Monsieur*, who as he entered the apartment of Madame de Maintenon exclaimed earnestly; "Oh! Sire, what a loss you have just sustained."

"By no means;" was the cold reply; "if M. de Louvois had not died so suddenly, he would have been in the Bastille within two days."

The indifference of the king, was, however, exceeded by that of Madame de Maintenon, who had never

forgiven the opposition of the deceased minister to the recognition of her marriage; and so little did she endeavour to conceal her real feelings, that upon being asked by a friend if she intended to put up prayers for the soul of the deceased, she answered with some asperity, that she had sins enough of her own which required her prayers, and was not consequently called upon to expiate those of others.

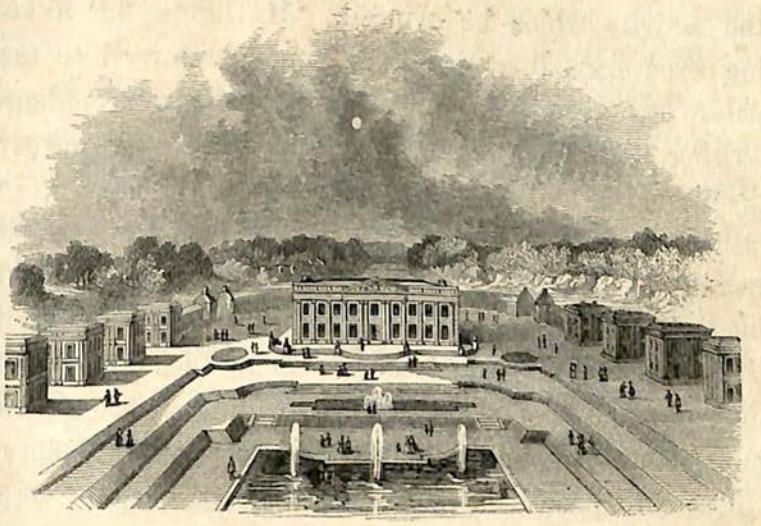
Rumours of poison followed close upon the death of the minister; and St. Simon even asserts that the crime was proved at the *post mortem* examination of his body. According to the statement of the duke, Louvois, who was a great water-drinker, always had a jug full of that liquid placed upon the mantel of his cabinet, from which he drank whenever he required it. He had swallowed a draught from this jug before he proceeded to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and just as a servant retired, who had been alone in the room for several minutes. This man was subsequently arrested, and put upon his trial; but it had scarcely commenced when he was liberated by the king's order, and the depositions which had been taken committed to the flames, with an express command that no further investigation should take place.

Louvois was no sooner in his grave than a marked and striking change was effected in the manner of Madame de Maintenon. We have stated elsewhere, that although continually present at all the discussions which arose between the king and his minister, she invariably remained silent, and apparently abstracted, until appealed to for her opinion; she had also hitherto stringently abstained from influencing (at least, visibly) any public measure, or

the fortunes of any public man; while she had limited her familiar circle to a small number of individuals, and those selected rather for their social qualities, than their political position; but suddenly a revolution alike of feeling and of action supervened; she became the centre of court favour, the object of court adulation, and the source of court advancement. "My attendants never served me as they should have done until they saw me leaving your apartments;" wrote one of the first nobles of France to the *ci-devant* "widow Scarron" upon one occasion; while a second courtier, in a circle where the history of the century was under discussion, observed that after the death of Louvois the next chapter should be headed, "End of the reign of Louis the Great;" and the succeeding one "Reign of Frances d'Aubigné." [1]

The epigram was a bitter one.

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.



CHAPTER X.

THE MARQUIS DE POMPONNE—INDUSTRY OF LOUIS XIV.—SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT OF THE MINISTERS—MARRIAGES OF THE DUKE DE CHARTRES AND THE DUKE DU MAINE—GOVERNORS OF THE DUKE DE CHARTRES—THE ABBÉ DUBOIS—PORTRAIT OF PHILIP D'ORLEANS—THE ROYAL BROTHERS—FRIVOLITY OF MONSIEUR—HIS PORTRAIT—HIS COSTUME—HIS INSIGNIFICANCE—THE VALUE OF AN ADDITIONAL INCH—MAGNIFICENCE OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—MADAME DE MAINTENON AND THE NEW DUCHESS DU MAINE—HER ARROGANCE—STINGING REJOINDER OF THE DUKE D'ELBŒUF—COWARDICE OF THE DUKE DU MAINE—THE DUTCH JOURNAL—DEATH OF MADEMOISELLE—PRESUMPTION OF M. DE LAUZUN—CAPTURE OF NAMUR—THE GHOST-SEER—MADAME ARMOND—A BAFFLED INTRIGUE—POWER OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—DISTRUST OF THE KING—EQUIVOCAL POSITION OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—THE MONARCH AND THE COURT-LADIES—AMBULATORY BANQUETS.

A MONTH after the death of Louvois, the Marquis de Pomponne was called to the council; Torcy his son-in-law confirmed in his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Marquis de Barbesieux made Secretary of the War Office; and from this period Louis XIV. devoted himself, with increased energy, to the transaction of public business. Those who were the most familiar with his habits, were lost in astonishment at

the activity which he evinced. He limited his hunting excursions to a couple of hours; returned to the palace at a given moment; devoted four hours to reading, writing, and dictating to his secretaries; and frequently dismissed the princesses immediately after supper, in order to expedite his foreign couriers.[1] Nor was it merely by his own example that the king encouraged his ministers to increased diligence; he also rewarded it by valuable presents and personal distinction; and during the latter years of his reign they succeeded in placing themselves on a level with the nobility, whose dress and manners they adopted, and with whom they formed alliances calculated still more to lessen the disparity which had formerly existed between them; while their wives ultimately obtained the privilege of driving in the royal equipages, and dining at the royal table.

Two marriages of importance were, however, destined, at the commencement of the year 1692, to relieve for a time the monotony of public business, and the tedium of the court. Those of the Duke de Chartres, and the Duke du Maine. Louis XIV. had, as we have already stated, been for several years endeavouring to obtain the consent of *Monsieur* to an alliance between his son and Mademoiselle de Blois,[2] the youngest daughter of Madame de Montespan, in which he ultimately succeeded through the influence of the Chevalier de Lorraine, the favourite

[1] Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

[2] This princess was the third of the king's daughters who had borne the same name; the first having been Mary Anne, Princess de Conti, of whom Madame de la Vallière was the mother; and the second a former daughter of Madame de Montespan, who died at an early age.

of the duke; but he had found it impossible to secure either that of *Madame*, or of her son, until the agency of an individual, whose insignificance would have appeared to place him beyond the pale of so exalted an intrigue, liberated the monarch from his embarrassment, and enabled him to accomplish a marriage which he had so long desired.

Monsieur had been singularly unfortunate in his selection of governors for the Duke de Chartres; as, although they had in every case been men of distinguished merit and acquirements, his mania for exalted titles had caused him to appoint persons already so far advanced in life, that they succeeded each other with a rapidity inimical to the interests of their pupil. In the interval from 1683 to 1692, M. de Chartres had no less than four;—the Duke de Navailles, marshal of France, an honourable, virtuous, and learned man, lived only two years after his appointment; the Marshal d'Estrades, also an accomplished preceptor, did not longer fill the office, although he was seventy-nine when he died; the Duke de la Vieuville, the least eligible of the three, survived one year longer; and was replaced in his turn by M. d'Arcy, a councillor of state, a brave soldier, and a skilful diplomatist; but who, unfortunately for the young duke, had been about him only for a short period when his marriage emancipated him from all guardianship.

During the intervals consequent upon these changes, the duty of governor had been performed by M. de St. Laurent, deputy master of the ceremonies to *Monsieur*, a man of obscure birth, and unprepossessing person; but, nevertheless, well calculated to educate a prince. His want of nobility had, however, sufficed to deprive him of the

title of governor; although upon every occasion when a vacancy occurred, as well as when etiquette required a new appointment, the capacity and merit of M. de St. Laurent caused him to retain all the authority of the office, even while others enjoyed the honour.

In the course of his frequent visits to the curate of St. Eustache, with whom he was on terms of intimacy, M. de St. Laurent formed an acquaintance with a youth named Dubois, whose extraordinary intellect made a strong impression upon his mind. He was the son of an apothecary of Brive-la-Galliarde in Lower Limousin, who had pursued the study of physic at Rheims under a Dr. Letellier; but the latter having died before his studies were completed, had bequeathed him to the kindness of the curate, who being, in his turn, unable to provide for him, had recommended him to the notice of M. de St. Laurent.

As the young man wrote a fine hand, his new patron presented him to the Duke de Chartres in the capacity of writing-master; but ere long, conscious that he was thus cramping his genius, he caused him to assume the abbatial costume, in order to secure to him a befitting position in the establishment; and promoted him to the study, where his duties consisted in preparing the prince for his final examination by himself. Thus St. Laurent at once found the personal relief which his increasing infirmities began to render necessary, and had the satisfaction of witnessing the daily progress of his royal pupil.

From the period in which Dubois had advanced in fortune, he had courted the good graces of the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Marquis d'Effiat, who bore unlimited sway in the household of *Monsieur;* and at the death of M. de

St. Laurent, as the *soi-disant* abbé was already established in the functions of tutor, his new friends became anxious that his official station should be confirmed. This, however, could not, as they were well aware, be easily accomplished, owing to the obscurity of his birth, which was still fresh in the memory of every one. They consequently temporized; raised objections to the persons proposed; caused the postponement of the appointment; expatiated on the extraordinary improvement of the young prince under his tuition; and at length, when they had rendered *Monsieur* weary of the subject, succeeded in securing the nomination of their new *protégé;* who, in return for so great a service, and conscious of the necessity of their continued support, lent himself unscrupulously to all their views.

The first service which they exacted from the titular abbé was his co-operation in promoting the marriage between the Duke de Chartres and the king's daughter; to which the young prince was strongly opposed, not merely because any matrimonial alliance must tend to interfere with his favourite pursuits and habits, but also through the influence of his mother, who, justly proud of her four and thirty quarterings, which had as yet been unsullied by any derogatory alliance, looked upon the union of her son with one whom she persisted in calling "His Majesty's bastard," as a disgrace which could never again be obliterated.

Dubois had, however, the advantage of constant companionship with his pupil, who soon discovered that the presence of his preceptor was quite as essential in his hours of recreation as in those of study.

Philip of Orleans, the future Regent of France, had,

at this period, far outgrown his age, both in physical and mental power; and although still a boy in years, was manly in all his ideas and habits. He prided himself greatly upon a fancied resemblance to Henry IV, whom he endeavoured to imitate in every particular; but the analogy between them was not so striking as regarded their persons, for the Duke de Chartres had neither the long countenance of that monarch, nor his strongly-marked Bourbon nose, nor his lofty forehead; the cynical expression of their eyes alone conveying any idea of resemblance.

The prince was of middle height, and eminently graceful in his deportment, although he walked badly, owing to an organic weakness to which he had nearly fallen a victim in his infancy; his eyes were bright and lively, his mouth joyous, his complexion high, his face round and full, and his nose thick and flat, with large nostrils; in short, it was a countenance of mingled intellect and sensuality, which was the very transcript of his character. His hand was singularly white and well formed, and he was so anxious to preserve its beauty, that it was said by a celebrated writer of the time, that "each of his nails exacted as much care as a reliquary."

A solid education, pursued with ardour, had accelerated the precocity of his intellect; for not only had he studied all the modern languages, formed a thorough acquaintance with the authors of antiquity, turned his serious attention to the important questions of philosophy and politics, and mastered much of the knowledge necessary to the administration of the internal economy of a kingdom; but he had also secured those resources against the tedium of a court, and the etiquette of royalty, which

were able to render him at every crisis independent of both, by cultivating literature and art. His favourite studies were, however, mathematics and astronomy; and his darling pursuit chemistry, to which he devoted a great portion of his time. He was an agreeable musician, a pleasing poet, and a good artist; and excelled in everything which required quickness, memory, and address. He cared little for field-sports, and still less for the etiquette of Versailles; preferring the liberty which is so seldom accorded to persons of his rank, to all the high-sounding honours to which he might fairly have laid claim. His first campaign at the siege of Mons had sufficed to prove that he was courageous even to temerity; while his governor, the Marquis d'Arcy, had been compelled, at the battle of Leuze, to throw himself before him at the risk of his own life, in order to prevent his falling into the power of the enemy. In temper he was joyous and affable, slow to take offence, and so thoroughly devoid of egotism, that he was frequently wanting in justice to himself. He despised and detested everything which savoured of revenge, and readily forgave an injury even before it was acknowledged. He was, however, slow to believe in the probity of mankind; and had no faith in female virtue, his early experience of the sex having tended to give him an unfortunate bias, and to lead him to consider such a quality as at once unnecessary and inconvenient; and consequently, with all his talents, all his acquirements, and all his refined tastes, he early became dissipated, fickle, and heartless.

Such was the ardent and ill-regulated nature upon which Dubois was called to exercise his influence; and he did not hesitate to pander to the worst passions of his

pupil in order to retain and increase it; while the excesses in which he encouraged the young prince became at length so notorious that they reached the ears of the king, and excited his extreme displeasure; and this was the precise moment chosen by Dubois to extort his reluctant consent to a marriage, which, as he ably represented, would tend at once to restore him to the favour of the monarch.

Monsieur had already, as we have previously stated, been induced by the Chevalier de Lorraine to accede to the wishes of his royal brother; and although his pride had for a time revolted at the idea of bestowing his only son upon a daughter of Madame de Montespan, he had ultimately done so the more readily as he was sincerely attached to the banished favourite, and foresaw, in the projected alliance, an increase of personal favour with the king. Moreover, the dominant feature of *Monsieur's* character was weakness. He habitually permitted himself to be governed by every one who acquired an influence over him, and did not appear to perceive that he was a mere puppet in the hands of his favourites.

Of *Madame* he stood in an awe which was so thoroughly appreciated at court, that during the early favour of Madame de Maintenon, when that lady had incurred the displeasure of the duchess by a sarcasm, and the prince complained of the insult to the king, saying that it had greatly offended *his wife*, Louis XIV. had replied with a smile,—

"For one who piques himself on speaking his native language with so much correctness, you have just committed a grievous error, in which I will set you right. Here is what you should have said: 'I am come to complain of

Madame de Maintenon, who, by some ambiguous words, has offended, or has endeavoured to offend, *my husband.*' "

Monsieur, conscious of the absurdity of his position, could not restrain his laughter; and the sarcasm of the mistress of the robes was suffered to go unpunished.[1]

The great delight of *Monsieur* consisted in building, in masquerading, in fêtes, and in amusements of every description. He cared nothing for more exalted pleasures, or more intellectual pursuits; he disliked reading, and detested all serious conversation; but entered with delight into the gossipry of the court-ladies, and the frivolities of the courtiers. The ball-room and the table were the two great occupations of his life, and he was conspicuous in both; for he danced admirably, and ate voraciously. The kingly magnificence which he displayed at his court in the Palais-Royal, and at St. Cloud, extended to the merest trifles; and his toilette-table was a mass of plate and jewellery. His prodigality, excessive as it was, met, however, with no rebuke from Louis XIV, who, satisfied by the deference and respect which he always exhibited towards his person, and satisfied that he would never oppose his measures, indulged him in all his expensive and fantastic follies. Morally, *Monsieur* was nul. He had more manner than mind, more simplicity then wit, more carelessness than kindness, more indiscretion than frankness, and more distrust than prudence; and in his case qualities, which would have been estimable in others, degenerated into defects.

This sketch of *Monsieur* would, however, be incomplete, did we not subjoin a description of his person, as he appeared at the marriage of the Duke de Chartres.

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

In stature he was very short, a defect that he endeavoured to overcome by the immense height of the heels of his shoes, which were surcharged with ribbons, and gave him the appearance of walking upon stilts; while the extreme rotundity of his figure destroyed the grace of his carriage, and made his movements heavy. He bore a considerable resemblance to Louis XIII, save that he did not possess the same elevated cast of countenance. His face was extremely long, his nose prominent, his eyes large and dark, and his mouth small. His physiognomy had an expression of kindness, which was, however, counteracted by haughtiness; and when he smiled, which he did frequently, and generally at an unfortunate moment, his whole appearance was rendered less prepossessing by the exhibition of two ranges of teeth which were unfortunately defective. He wore an immense black wig, curled, and slightly powdered, which, brought forward upon his shoulders, fell on either side to his chest in absurd and almost ridiculous profusion; and also a quantity of rouge, and even patches. His coat was composed of green silk, with stripes and button-holes of gold embroidery, and was gathered into folds upon the hips in order to increase their apparent size, which fell below the knees like a tunic; the buttons were of emeralds set in gold; and his waistcoat, of rose-coloured silk, embroidered with golden flowers in a profusion which almost concealed the original material, was traversed from right to left by the blue ribbon of the Holy Ghost, supporting a sword whose hilt was incrusted with diamonds, and disappeared under an enormous green bow fringed with gold. Ribbons were profusely scattered over the whole of his costume; and ornamented not only

the principal articles of his dress, but even his white satin shoes, and his round beaver with its double circle of feathers overhanging the edges on all sides, which he never placed upon his head, save in cases of absolute necessity, or on occasions of rigorous etiquette. The principal feature of his costume was, however, the extraordinary and prodigious display of jewellery in which he indulged. Crosses and stars were profusely strewn over his vest; he had rings upon every finger, and bracelets on his wrists; triple ruffles about his hands; and a cravatte and collar of Hungarian point almost beyond price; and in this extravagant attire he divided his attention between the courtiers and the mirror, into which he gazed with evident satisfaction, and by whose aid he was enabled speedily to correct every little derangement in his attire consequent upon the heat and pressure of the throng.

Such was *Monsieur* in the year 1692; a weak friend, a harmless enemy, and an effeminate prince; and under these circumstances, it will scarcely appear extraordinary that he should so far forget his dignity as even to sacrifice the honour of the house of Orleans to present convenience, and probable advantage. *Madame*, however, was differently constituted; and her indignation was so violent when her son at length announced to her that he had acceded to the wishes of the king and the orders of his father, that in the first paroxysm of her anger and mortification she answered him by a blow.

But aware that against the will of Louis XIV, the supineness of *Monsieur*, and the concession of her son, she had no alternative save ultimate compliance, *Madame* at length resolved to reconcile herself to what she persisted, nevertheless, in calling her dishonour; for she

dreaded that should she continue to indulge in an opposition which must necessarily prove fruitless, the king might be induced to punish her pertinacity by abandoning the interests of the Elector-Palatine, of whom he was at that period the support.

In consequence of this somewhat tardy reflection, therefore, *Madame* gradually suffered herself to be appeased, and even attended the reading of the marriage-contract, without betraying one symptom of indignation; especially as Louis XIV. gave to his daughter a dowry of two millions of livres, to be paid at the close of the war; and an annual income of two hundred thousand; with a marriage-gift in jewels estimated at two hundred thousand crowns; renewing, moreover, to the Duke de Chartres the donation already made to *Monsieur* of the Palais-Royal, bequeathed to the crown by Cardinal Mazarin.

The marriage was accomplished with great magnificence, to the chagrin of the Marquise de Montespan; who, after having vented her annoyance in a letter which she wrote on the occasion to the Bavarian princess, (and which was couched in terms well fitted to arouse all the pride of *Madame*, and to strengthen the hatred she had long borne towards the haughty favourite,) did not condescend to recognise the alliance in any other manner.

Only one month later, it was followed by that of the Duke du Maine with Anna Louisa Benedicta de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Charolais, the second daughter of the Prince de Condé.[1]

The king had in vain endeavoured to dissuade M. du Maine from marriage, frankly declaring to him, that

[1] Grand-daughter of the Great Condé.

it was not persons in his position who were called upon to found a family; but, urged by the wishes of the duke, and in compliance with the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon, whose affection for her nursling continued to be boundless, Louis XIV. at length consented to the measure, although in direct opposition to his better judgment. He had always been anxious that the legitimated princes should remain unmarried; but as he found it impossible to convince the duke of the propriety of such an arrangement, he resolved to seek him a wife in one of the first houses in France; upon which The Prince, informed of what had transpired, proposed one of his own daughters to the monarch.[1] M. de Condé saw that the rank, the influence, and the favour of the king's natural children was increasing from day to day; and the fact that one of them had actually become Duchess de Chartres, rendered him more than ever anxious to secure the Duke du Maine as his son-in-law. In these views he was earnestly encouraged by *Madame*, who had begun to have painful apprehensions that Louis XIV, after having disposed of her son, would next deprive her of her daughter, and who consequently rejoiced to see the danger of such an event removed through the agency of The Prince.

The proposition was no sooner accepted than it became necessary to choose between the three sisters; and as they were all extremely small, the selection was made by measurement; when Anna Louisa Benedicta proving to be the tallest by an inch, it was decided that she should become Duchess du Maine. The marriage took place

[1] Souvenirs de Madame de Caylus.

with the same ceremonies as that of the Duke de Chartres; but on this occasion, Madame de Montespan, whose vanity was flattered that the alliance should have been solicited by the family of the bride, was regal in her liberality. She presented the bed, of which the hangings, embroidered with gold and pearls, cost more than a million of livres of the present day; and gave to her daughter-in-law a casket of jewels estimated at two millions of that time; while she also refused to receive again one of her three costly services of plate, which had been borrowed of her by her son on the occasion of the bridal banquet. Nothing could more thoroughly tend to demonstrate the satisfaction of the marchioness than this profusion, for she was naturally avaricious, and averse to making presents: but the opportunity here afforded, alike of exhibiting her magnificence, and of offering an additional affront to *Madame*, was too precious to be sacrificed to mere feelings of economy.

The settlement actually made, or the donation really bestowed, by Louis XIV. upon his favourite son on the occasion of his marriage was never known; and it is believed that, as he had already been rendered extremely wealthy by the compulsatory bequests of MADEMOISELLE, it was wilfully kept secret, in order not to shock the feelings of the nation, which had begun to evince some symptoms of having awakened to a consciousness of the wide contrast existing between the prodigality of the nobles and the poverty of the people. All that transpired was the fact that on the eve of the ceremony, the king had presented to the bride two costly caskets, the one containing a suit of diamonds, and the other a set of mixed jewels.

From the moment of the marriage, Madame de Maintenon attached herself strongly to the wife of her favourite. "The princess;" she wrote to the Abbess of Maubuisson; "is about to pass the Holy Week in your community. Compel her to rest herself thoroughly. They kill her here by the restraints and fatigues of the court. She is crushed under the weight of gold and precious stones. They will prevent her from growing, and destroy her health. She is prettier without a cap than with all their ornaments. She eats nothing; in all probability does not sleep well; and I am dying with fear lest they should have married her too young. I wish I could keep her at St. Cyr, dressed like one of the pupils, and romping as merrily. There are no austerities practised in conventual houses equal to those to which the etiquette of a court subjects the great."

In another letter she describes the young princess as "pretty, amiable, cheerful, and witty;" but as though she had nevertheless a latent doubt of the final result of the motherly interest which she was taking in her welfare, she adds: "If she deceives me, I renounce all princesses for the future." Nor was it long ere she perceived that even with the good qualities which she had discovered, or believed that she had discovered, in the new duchess, there was no solid foundation to work upon: "You have deceived me;" she writes more sadly than reproachfully, to the governess of the princess; "on the principal point upon which I consulted you; that of religion. She has no tendency whatever towards piety; but is anxious to do everything that she sees others do. I do not desire to make her a bigot; but I confess that I should like to find her more regular in her devotions,

and more agreeable alike to God, to the king, and to the Duke du Maine; who has sufficient good sense to desire his wife should be more virtuous than those by whom she is surrounded."[1]

We have already stated that the Duke du Maine was witty, cunning, and deceitful, but eminently agreeable whenever he sought to please; while his enmity was the more dangerous from the fact, that when he desired to revenge a wrong, he hesitated at no meanness or falsehood which could ensure success. His wife possessed an intellect equal to his own, but she exercised it in a different manner, and frittered away capabilities of a high order upon novels and plays; making the latter almost the business of her life, committing them to memory, and afterwards causing them to be performed at her little court. Her courage was masculine in its extent and violence: she was adventurous, bold, and passionate; ever acting upon the impulse of the moment, and careless of all results. She despised the weakness of her husband, and openly reproached him with an economy which she designated as avarice, and to which she at once declared that she would never lend herself.

M. du Maine was unequal to contend against this fiery spirit; even his subtlety was at fault; and while he persisted in the same line of conduct by which he had long succeeded in persuading the monarch that he was utterly devoid of that very ambition which was in fact perpetually gnawing at his heart, passing whole days in his closet, avoiding society, hunting without attendants, and dining alone in his apartment, he was condemned

[1] Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

to the mortification of seeing the duchess hold a magnificent court at Sceaux, (which splendid estate had been presented to him by the king upon his marriage,) and plunge into expences by which he was ultimately ruined, without venturing to expostulate; such was his terror of the violent disposition of his wife.

To this want of moral courage the Duke du Maine added a total absence of personal bravery; and the fact was so well known that it at length became the common jest of the courtiers, who sought so little to disguise from him their opinions upon the subject, that on one occasion at the close of a campaign, the Duke d'Elbœuf inquired of him where he expected to serve during the following year; remarking that wherever His Highness went, he had made up his mind to accompany him. The prince inquired for what reason. "Because," was the sarcastic reply, as the duke glanced towards the by-standers; "near your person one is sure to be safe."

M. du Maine bit his lip, and turned away without making any rejoinder.

This unfortunate failing of his favourite son had, however, remained unknown to Louis XIV. until he, on one occasion, met with a paragraph in a Dutch journal, in which the most flattering panegyrics were poured forth upon the courage of the Duke du Maine; who had, as it was asserted, after exhibiting during the progress of an engagement the desperate valour of a hero, finally received a severe wound, and been carried from the field insensible. The eye of the king flashed, and his brow flushed, as he read the passage; while he even forgot the danger of the smitten prince in the pride that he felt at his heroism; but this paternal joy was destined to

be short-lived. In the next number of the journal an apology was made for the error into which it had been betrayed, by a mistake in the name of the brave officer who was so grievously wounded; and an assurance given that the Duke du Maine was not only unhurt, but that he had never, throughout the whole of the action, been exposed to the slightest danger.

This elaborate contradiction awakened the suspicions of the king; and he inquired of one of his valets de chambre named la Vienne, from whom he frequently learned truths which others endeavoured to conceal, if he had ever heard a doubt cast upon the personal courage of the Duke du Maine. La Vienne remained silent; a circumstance which only increased the curiosity and apprehension of the monarch, who forthwith insisted upon a reply; and thus urged, the reluctant attendant was compelled to admit that the cowardice of M. du Maine had long passed into a proverb, not only in the armies of His Majesty, but even in those of the enemy; a revelation which was one of the most heavy blows, alike to his pride and his affection, to which throughout his reign Louis XIV. was ever subjected.[1]

The marriage of the duke was not agreeable to MADEMOISELLE, to whom he was indebted for the principal portion of his fortune. Mademoiselle de Bourbon had offended her by a want of respect on several occasions; and she declared that if the alliance ever took place, she would never see either the duke or the duchess again; a threat which was nevertheless disregarded, for there was nothing further to be hoped from her generosity; and

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

her displeasure was too unimportant to change the resolution of the king.

MADEMOISELLE was not long destined, however, to endure this mortification; for, on the 5th of April in the following year she died in the palace of the Luxembourg, at the age of sixty-three years, the richest private princess in Europe. The hatred which had replaced her former passion for Lauzun, was too powerful for her strength; and after living for years in a wearisome and monotonous pomp, which she dragged from one of her estates to another, without obtaining from it either consideration or solace; absenting herself entirely from the court save on occasions of ceremony when her presence was essential; frittering away her intellect in vain and idle futilities; and finding her principal occupation in assuming mourning at the death of every personage with whom she could claim the slightest and most distant connexion, and explaining in the most prolix manner to those about her the exact degree and amount of the consanguinity and alliance of each; she ultimately fell into a state of languor and suffering which, after enduring for many months, terminated in death.

Monsieur and *Madame* were her constant companions during her sickness; for, in addition to the close intimacy which had long existed between herself and the prince, he coveted her immense fortune; and became, as he had anticipated, her sole legatee. The largest portion of her original possessions had, however, as we have already seen, passed into other hands.

On the death of the princess, M. de Lauzun assumed the mourning of a widowed husband, and appeared at the funeral in a black cloak; an exhibition which

seriously displeased the king, who commanded the Duke de St. Aignan to desire him instantly to retire. "I cannot at such a moment listen to the voice of pride;" was the cool reply of the former favourite when the message was delivered to him; "I am absorbed by my grief; and could wish to see the king more occupied by his own;" and he remained to the close of the ceremony; while, even when the period was past in which the trappings of woe should in every case have been discontinued, he nevertheless persisted in changing his liveries to a shade of brown so deep as to be almost black; in order, as he stated, to keep alive the memory of MADEMOISELLE, whose portrait was to be seen in every apartment of his house.

The campaigns of 1692 and 1693 were the last in which Louis XIV. ever took an active part, and the capture of Namur his closing exploit; and it was on his return to Versailles after this expedition, that Madame de Maintenon is asserted to have resolved upon making a final effort to effect her recognition as Queen of France; but all ordinary means having failed to accomplish her purpose, she now, according to these authorities, determined to have recourse to supernatural agency; believing that although the monarch had resisted all human intervention, he would not venture to dispute what he could not fail to consider as a decree from heaven.

One day, accordingly, a farrier from the little town of Salon, in Provence, arrived at Versailles, having made the journey on foot, and proceeded at once to the palace, without even waiting to rest himself; where he applied to M. de Brissac to obtain for him an audience of the king, to whom he had, as he declared, something of the highest importance to communicate. M. de Brissac, however,

declined the mission, the obscure station of the applicant not rendering him eligible for such an honour. But the peasant was not to be repulsed; and his pertinacity was so great, and his applications for admittance to the presence of the monarch so persevering in every quarter where he imagined he had a prospect of success, that the circumstance at length reached the ears of Louis himself; who, anxious to see how far the resolution of the man would carry him, caused him to be told that what he requested was impracticable, as the King of France was not accessible to every comer. Nevertheless, the peasant refused to yield; asserting that if he could once see His Majesty, he would tell him things which were known only to himself, and which would at once convince him that he was not required to listen to an impostor; but demanding, if this interview were really impossible, that he might at least be admitted to one of the ministers of state.

The king, curious to ascertain the result of this singular adventure, desired the Marquis de Barbésieux to receive the man on the following day, who when he next made his appearance at the palace was accordingly directed to his apartments; but the peasant shook his head, observing that he had requested to be introduced to one of the ministers of state, and that M. de Barbésieux was not a minister of state. This objection startled every one; for the man had only been in Versailles a few days, and it was not anticipated that he could so soon have acquainted himself with the exact rank of the great officers of the crown. It sufficed, however, to render the king more than ever desirous to penetrate the mystery of his errand; and he accordingly deputed M. de Pomponne, whose

ministerial functions could not be disputed by this extraordinary farrier, to grant him the desired interview.

On learning by whom he was to be received, the peasant at once declared his willingness to confide his secret; and he was no sooner alone with the minister in his cabinet than he related, that one night as he was returning at a late hour to his village, he suddenly found himself, while passing under a tree, surrounded by a great light, in the centre of which there appeared to him the figure of a woman, young, fair, and beautiful, dressed in a long white robe, over which she wore a royal mantle; and he had scarcely remarked all this, when, as he asserted, she thus addressed him: "I am the Queen Maria Theresa. Go to the king, and repeat to him the circumstances which I am about to communicate to you. Heaven will assist you during your journey; and when you arrive, should the king doubt that it was I who sent you, then relate to him a circumstance of which he alone is cognizant, which no other person can know, and by which he will at once recognise the truth of what you will have to tell him. If, in the first place, as is extremely probable, you cannot obtain an audience of himself, demand to speak to a minister of state; but, above all things, make no communications to others, whatever may be their rank. Depart boldly and speedily; and execute what I command on pain of death."

The peasant had scarcely, as he declared, solemnly pledged himself to implicit obedience, and learned the secrets upon which his mission was to be based, when he once more found himself alone and in darkness; and so thoroughly bewildered by the scene through

which he had just passed, that he was unable to pursue his homeward path; but, throwing himself down under the tree, ultimately forgot his terrors in sleep.

When he awoke on the following morning, he attributed the whole adventure to a dream, and made no preparation for his journey: but, two days afterwards, as he was passing by the same spot, the vision re-appeared, uttering menaces so fearful in consequence of his disobedience, that he again promised to comply; pleading as an excuse for his first failure, his utter destitution, and the impossibility of his undertaking so long a journey without the means of subsistence. To this objection the vision had, however, he said, replied by directing him to wait upon the commissioner of the province, and to inform him of what he had seen, and the orders which he had received; adding, that he would then supply him with all that was necessary.

Nevertheless, it required a third apparition to convince the peasant, as he declared to the minister, that he was really in his right mind; but his terror became so great at the threats which were fulminated against him on this last occasion, that he immediately departed for Aix, where he told his extraordinary story to the commissioner, who, without hesitation, gave him a small sum of money, and urged him to set forth upon the instant.

Such was the tale to which M. de Pomponne was destined to listen; and wild and extravagant as it appeared, it yet contained elements which startled the judgment of the statesman; but it was in vain that, by every means he could invent, he endeavoured to acquire a knowledge of the assumed communication which was

to be a pass-word to the confidence of the king, as the man resolutely refused to confide it to any ears save those of the monarch himself.

When he was informed of this circumstance, Louis XIV. could no longer restrain his curiosity, but resolved personally to converse with the peasant; and for this purpose, he desired that he might be introduced into his cabinet by a private stair. Their first interview, which was strictly secret, lasted an entire hour; and on the following day another took place of equal length, attended with the same precautions.

On the succeeding morning, as the king was descending the same staircase by which the ghost-seer had been introduced, in order to attend a hunt, M. de Duras, who by his high rank and still higher favour was in a position to say whatever he pleased to the monarch, began to speak of the farrier of Salon with extreme contempt, and terminated his attack by a proverb which at that period was very commonly used, "Either that man is mad, or the king is not noble." As the words passed his lips, Louis XIV. suddenly stopped, and replied emphatically; "If the proverb be true, duke, then it is I who am not noble; for I have twice conversed with him, and each time at considerable length, and I have found all that he has said replete with good sense and truth."

The extreme seriousness with which this declaration was made, startled all by whom it was overheard; but as M. de Duras still ventured to reply by a doubtful gesture, the king added; "Learn that this man has spoken to me of a circumstance which occurred to myself more than twenty years ago, and of which no one living

can be aware, since I never divulged it to any human being; and this was the apparition of a phantom in the forest of St. Germain, who addressed me in the precise words which he has since repeated."

The same result ensued to the last, whenever the name of this peasant was mentioned before the king. Throughout the whole period of his residence at Versailles, all his expences were defrayed by the house-steward of the monarch; and when he was at length dismissed, the king not only presented him with a sum of money, but commanded the commissioner of Provence to take him under his especial protection; and, without removing him from his original sphere, to be careful that as long as he lived he should be amply provided for. It was not, however, to be anticipated that so singular an event as this could be suffered to pass quietly into oblivion; and accordingly, despite the silence of the king, and the discretion of his minister, enough transpired upon the subject to enable the newsmongers of the court to collect the following particulars.

There was resident a Marseilles a certain Madame Armond, whose life had been one long romance; and who, plain in person, limited in means, and an untitled widow, had nevertheless contrived so to fascinate all with whom she came into contact, that no one was surprised when she at length induced M. Armond, the naval commissioner of Marseilles, to marry her under the most extraordinary circumstances. This lady had been for years the most intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon; and it was accordingly conjectured that in some moment of extreme confidence, which had since escaped his memory, the king had imparted to the latter the

secret of the apparition of the forest of St. Germain, which he believed himself never to have revealed; and that Madame de Maintenon had, in her turn, confided the circumstance to Madame Armond, who had made it her passport to the credulity of the farrier, as well as his own watch-word to the confidence of the king; while as regarded the mission with which this strange messenger was entrusted by the vision clad in white, and covered by a royal mantle, it was readily discovered to be an entreaty from the deceased queen that His Majesty should, without further procrastination, publicly acknowledge Madame de Maintenon as her successor; a report which, moreover, coincided with that which had obtained at the period of Maria Theresa's death, that she had, in her last moments, placed her marriage-ring in the hand of Madame de Maintenon![1]

If these rumours were, indeed, founded in truth, it is certain that the plot did not succeed, and that she never renewed a similar attempt; for she soon became convinced that the declared resolution of the king upon this subject would never be shaken; and she had sufficient control over herself to accept his decision without a murmur, and to resign herself to his will. Nor had she reason to repent her prudence; for the monarch no sooner perceived that he had nothing more to apprehend from her pertinacity, than his respect, his confidence, and his affection increased tenfold, and her influence became so powerful, that her interference sufficed to secure results which were otherwise unattainable.

A proof of this fact is afforded by the circumstance that

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

a lady of small fortune, who was anxious to accomplish the marriage of her daughter with the heir of a wealthy family, whose members did not consider the alliance sufficiently advantageous, conceived the idea of introducing herself surreptitiously into the antechamber of Madame de Maintenon towards the close of her dinner hour; when, having succeeded in arriving there, she counterfeited indisposition, and approaching a window with a napkin in her hand, requested a glass of water. She was seen thus occupied by several persons to whom she was known, and was supposed to have been an invited guest; the report of her having been seized with sudden indisposition at the table of Madame de Maintenon became current; and the intelligence of her favour in such a quarter having reached the family of the coveted bridegroom, they no longer withheld their consent to the marriage.[1]

This anxiety to secure the interest of Madame de Maintenon was, without doubt, a consequence of the power which Louis XIV. had ceded to her over the affairs of the court: but this power by no means extended to those of the government; indeed, in all subjects connected with state policy, the king was so constantly on his guard against her, that, on several occasions, when she had too openly betrayed her purpose, and that he discovered a particular minister to be endeavouring to favour one of her relatives or friends, he made a point of opposing the arrangement for that very reason, and could never be induced to yield,—even making a merit to herself of his firmness. When this

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

occurred, Madame de Maintenon at first had recourse to tears, and was on thorns for several days afterwards; but having secured the appointment of Fagon as principal physician, and feeling herself safe in the hands of a man who could essentially serve her, and whose opportunities of so doing were certain and frequent, she ultimately affected illness after scenes of this description, and generally contrived by such means to carry her point.[1]

It is presumed also that Louis XIV. had reason to suspect Madame de Maintenon of some secret intrigue, for his perseverance in keeping her almost constantly in his sight became at this period so determined, that she complains of it in one of her letters as of an insupportable restraint. "The king," she writes, "is perpetually on guard over me. I see no one. He never leaves my room, and I am compelled to rise at five in the morning in order to write to you." And again, on another occasion, she exclaims mournfully: "I experience more than ever that there is no compensation for the loss of liberty."

Her happiest moments were passed at St. Cyr, where she delighted to spend whole days in the midst of her pupils. "They occupy me considerably;" she was accustomed to say; "but far more agreeably than the intrigues of people who are alternately the deceivers and the deceived, and frequently both at the same time. My difficulty is to keep them occupied in school from morning till night, which is not easily managed when girls are eighteen or twenty years of age."[2]

The public, who were not aware of these facts, some

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

[2] Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

from personal dislike, and others from jealousy of her presumed influence, invariably rendered her responsible for everything that occurred, especially when the results were unfortunate or unpopular; and thus her position became one of constant annoyance as well as of perpetual difficulty. A queen in her own apartments, she had no sooner passed the threshold than she became a mere private individual. She affected no state, gave precedence to all women of rank, and neither made nor received visits, save in the case of the English queen; nevertheless, it must be remarked that all general officers, when they either left Versailles to join the army, or returned from a campaign, and all great personages who were compelled to absent themselves from the court on important business, both in going and returning never failed to pay their respects to her. Her chosen society was limited to a few persons of both sexes; but her solitude was nevertheless perpetually invaded.

In one of her letters she says; "I can only secure a quiet moment by chance. Madame de Dangeau dines with me, and in all probability Madame d'Haudincourt also, who will request an explanation of our reason for not eating every thing that is served up. I shall lose patience; she will blush at my irritation, and I shall follow her example. The princesses who have not attended the hunt will come in, followed by their cabal, and wait the return of the king in my apartment in order to go to dinner. I shall take no more interest in these visitors than I inspire. The hunters will return in a crowd, and will relate the whole history of their day's sport without sparing us a single detail. They will then go to dinner; and Madame de Dangeau will

challenge me with a yawn to a game of backgammon, &c. Such is the way in which people live at court."

Superadded to these restraints and intrusions, the victim of her own ambition had also to endure the egotistical exactions and caprices of a monarch, who "born under the purple," and accustomed to see his own convenience and comfort the care of all about him, had long ceased to perceive that they might prove inimical to the happiness of others. In the most dissipated years of his life, Louis XIV. had never sacrificed either his wishes or his vanity, even to the indisposition of those to whom he professed himself to be the most passionately attached, let the cause of that indisposition be what it might. Whatever were their sufferings,—and there is evidence that upon several occasions they were severe,—he would exempt them neither from the fatigue of travelling, nor from the etiquette of the court. They must be full dressed, covered with jewels, and tightly laced; dance, keep late hours, and always be ready to amuse him, or to start at a moment's notice upon any excursion which he proposed, without appearing to heed the cold, the heat, the wind, or the dust with which the carriage was constantly filled, because he was, as we have elsewhere remarked, partial to fresh air, and never would suffer the windows to be closed. One complaint of inconvenience sufficed to exclude the murmurer for ever. He seldom permitted any one but ladies to enter his coach, which was always stored with fruits, meats, and pastry; and before the party were a league upon their way, he invariably proposed that they should partake of some refreshment. Although he himself never touched any food between his regular repasts, it afforded him great amusement to see others

eat; and in order not to incur his displeasure, it was necessary to devour everything he offered; a necessity which was as imperative upon his own daughters and daughters-in-law, as upon the ladies of the court.[1] MADEMOISELLE, on more than one occasion, complains bitterly in her memoirs of the annoyance to which she was subjected by the immense quantities of food that she had been compelled to swallow while driving with the king.

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

CHAPTER XI.

FAMILY CIRCLE OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—THE COUNT D'AUBIGNÉ—HIS EXCESSES—THE TRUNCHEON IN SPECIE—THE MARRIAGE PROMISE—HIS ENFORCED RRTIREMENT—HIS EVASION—MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE DE LAUZUN—DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE BRIDE—ARRIVAL OF THE PRINCESS ADELAIDE OF SAVOY IN FRANCE—TREATY OF RISWICK—DEATH OF JAMES II.—HOUSEHOLD OF THE FUTURE DUCHESS DE BOURGOYNE—INDISPOSITION OF THE KING—ADVANTAGES OF A TÊTE-À-TÊTE—PREMATURE SALUTATIONS—THE DUCHESS DE LUDE—RECEPTION OF THE PRINCESS—THE COURT AT VERSAILLES—LETTER TO THE DUCHESS OF SAVOY—MADAME DE MAINTENON EDUCATES THE PRINCESS—HER DOCILITY—RETURN OF MADEMOISELLE DE CHOIN TO MEUDON—HER SUPPOSED MARRIAGE WITH THE DAUPHIN—HER HARSHNESS—EXTRAVAGANT PREPARATIONS FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE DE BOURGOYNE—HIS PORTRAIT—THE KING'S BALL—COURT-FELONS—THE HAT-BEARER—THE FATAL PROPHECY.

THE sufferings to which we have alluded in speaking of Madame de Maintenon, were not, however, the only ones to which she was subjected; for the conduct of her brother, the Count d'Aubigné, was a perpetual source of vexation and alarm; while that of her own family had been sufficiently ungracious throughout her early struggles, to make her distrustful of their subsequent attachment. During her widowhood they had not only utterly

neglected her, but treated her with absolute contempt; and it was not until she had secured the friendship of the king, that all her connexions even to the most remote degree, asserted their claims to relationship, and were to be found perpetually in her apartments. Among them were several petty nobles of Angoumois and Poitou, who had resided all their lives upon their estates, and who differed only from the other landowners about them by the privilege of wearing a sword; but there were also several who did no dishonour to her new rank. The Abbé d'Aubigné was one of these; and Louis XIV. was so much pleased by his appearance and demeanour, that Père la Chaise hastened to bestow upon him the archbishopric of Rouen, with the prospect of a cardinalate should Madame de Maintenon retain her influence.

Among her female relatives were the three daughters of the Count de Villette, who were all handsome and well-bred; and a beautiful child, the only daughter of the Marquis de Villette, to whom she soon became greatly attached, as well as to her three brothers; and this bevy of fair girls and graceful youths who were constantly about her person, became the companions and playfellows of the legitimized children of the king; and formed a little court of which Madame de Maintenon was justly proud.

The Count d'Aubigné her only brother, for whom she had a great affection, was her senior by several years; and she had no sooner begun to acquire some credit at court, than she exerted herself to advance his fortunes. He was a man of fine person and agreeable address, but his dissipation was unbounded; and having been his own master from boyhood, he was selfish and headstrong. His

libertine habits had excited animadversion even in his youth; and at the age of fifty, he still pursued the same unblushing career of vice. Through the interest of his sister, M. d'Aubigné was transferred from an obscure government to one of considerable importance, in which he made himself extremely popular; but where his extravagance so overwhelmed him with debt, that Madame de Maintenon was several times compelled to liberate him from his difficulties. At the gaming-table he was so notoriously reckless, that on one occasion, when the Duke de Vivonne, the brother of Madame de Montespan, on whom the king had conferred the dignity of marshal of France, entered a saloon in which play was going forward and remarked that the board was covered with gold, he exclaimed as he crossed the threshold; "I will risk a wager that it is d'Aubigné who has favoured us with all this display; it is a magnificence worthy of him." To which remark the count replied carelessly; "You would gain your bet, for it is in truth myself, who, as you see, have received my truncheon in specie."

The ready wit of M. d'Aubigné never forsook him; and one day, when his sister, after her marriage, was complaining of the wretchedness of her destiny, and declaring that she wished she were dead, he answered sarcastically; "In that case you must have been promised the hand of the monarch of the universe."

This was precisely the description of person calculated to harass and alarm Madame de Maintenon: for his profligacy was unconcealed, and his intemperance notorious; while despite his public income, which was very considerable, and his frequent drafts upon the treasury, he was always in want of money; and she, ere long,

came to the conclusion that he could only be reformed by starvation.

In consequence of this conviction, after having for a score of times confided in his promises of amendment, and supplied his necessities on the faith of those promises, which had all been successively falsified, she resolved to withhold all further assistance; and when he once more appeared before her, she accordingly assumed a cold and reproachful demeanour, and informed him, that the king was at last weary of his misconduct, which she had concealed from him as long as such a course had been possible; and that His Majesty now consented to pardon him only on condition that she would pledge herself that he should reform, or at least appear to do so; adding, that she had given this pledge, and must consequently insist upon its fulfilment.

In reply, the count assured her that his reformation was impossible; but that as regarded the affectation of amendment, he was quite ready to undertake it, if she would point out the method: upon which Madame de Maintenon, affecting not to remark the sarcasm, suggested that he should withdraw from the court for three weeks or a month, when she would spread a report of his conversion; and that he should meanwhile take up his residence with a M. Doyen, who had formed an establishment at St. Sulpice, where gentlemen of the first famlies in France lived as a common family, and devoted themselves to a life of charity and devotion, under the direction of certain distinguished ecclesiastics.

This proposal was by no means palatable to the pleasure-loving M. d'Aubigné, but his case was desperate; and as Madame de Maintenon finally promised him the sum of

twenty-five thousand livres at the close of his month's penance, he consented to assume the appearance of profound remorse; and retired to St. Sulpice, after signing the rules enforced by the society; fully resolved that when he was once in possession of the money, he would throw off the shackles with which his necessities had encumbered him.

Nor did he fail in his determination. On the very day which succeeded that in which he became the master of this new supply, he disappeared from the brotherhood of St. Sulpice; but this event had been foreseen; and M. Doyen had received an order, by virtue of which he again possessed himself of the person of the Count d'Aubigné, and placed him under the charge of a priest, who, whenever he left the house, followed him like his shadow. One day the count lost patience, and beat his keeper very severely, for which he was immediately condemned to close arrest for six weeks; and convinced at length that he should obtain nothing by violence, he found himself compelled to become more circumspect in his conduct; and thus relieved the harassed Madame de Maintenon from a great portion of her anxiety.

In the spring of 1695, M. de Lauzun, then sixty-three years of age, while assisting at the marriage of the Duke de St. Simon and the daughter of the Marshal de Lorges,[1] became enamoured of the sister of the new

[1] Guy Aldonce de Durfort, Duke de Lorges, was the younger son of Guy Aldonce de Durfort, Marquis de Duras, and of Elizabeth de la Tour. He made his first campaign under Turenne, who was his maternal uncle; and raised himself by his services to the rank of lieutenant-general. He served in this quality in the army of

duchess, a girl of fifteen; or at least endeavoured to persuade himself that he had done so, believing that by an alliance with a general officer, not only at the head of a distinct force, but also high in favour with the king, he might be enabled to obtain the restoration of his former rank as captain of the guard. With this conviction he lost no time in proposing his hand to Madame de Lorges, who at once rejected his suite; the known profligacy of the duke, and the great disparity of age which existed between the parties, sufficing to convince her that, by acceding to such a marriage, she should inevitably sacrifice the happiness of a child whom she loved; but M. de Lauzun never permitted himself to be dismayed by any obstacles, however apparently insurmountable; and he accordingly repeated his proposition to the marshal, offering to receive Mademoiselle de Quintin without any dowry; a consideration which commenced by making the father hesitate, and finally induced him to comply.

The poor duchess was in despair, but she was powerless against the will of her husband; while the affianced bride, dazzled by the rank and riches of her new suitor, and, moreover, persecuted by a former one to whom she was still more averse, consented without a murmur to the alliance; believing, as she subsequently confessed,

Turenne at the death of that great captain; and it was then that, on assuming the command, he effected the brilliant retreat which procured for him in the following year (1676) the dignity of Marshal of France. He afterwards commanded in Germany, took Heidelberg, and drove the Imperialists into Alsace. He died at the age of seventy-two years, captain of the body-guard, chevalier of the Orders of the king, and governor of Lorraine. In 1700 the king raised the town of Quintin to a duchy, under the title of Lorges-Quintin.

that the advanced age of the duke guaranteed to her married life only a brief interval of thraldom, at whose close she should find herself young, wealthy, and free to make a more consistent choice.

When the king was informed by M. de Lorges of the extraordinary son-in-law whom he had selected, should it be the pleasure of His Majesty to permit the marriage, Louis XIV. remarked coldly that the marshal was a bold man to receive the Duke de Lauzun into his family, and that he trusted he might never have cause to repent of so doing; but that, although he was at liberty to act as he saw fit, and to confide his own secrets to whomsoever he might choose to trust, he was possessed of no such privilege as regarded those of his sovereign; and that he would only sanction the marriage upon condition that he should pledge himself never to make the slightest communication to M. de Lauzun in which he was himself involved.

This somewhat ungracious sanction once obtained, the elderly duke, whose personal history was fated to be a romance even to the end, urged the celebration of his nuptials with such precipitancy, that the bridal party were not permitted time even to furnish themselves with new dresses and equipages. He remembered the fatal effects of his procrastination on a former occasion, and would not subject himself to a second mortification of the same description.

If it were indeed ambition which prompted this marriage on both sides, each party was fated to disappointment; for to the period of his death Lauzun continued to be a mere hanger-on of that court of which he had formerly been one of the most salient personages; while

the duchess was fated to wait until 1723 for the possession of that liberty to which she had aspired; when she finally buried her husband at the age of ninety years.[1]

In compliance with the treaty of Notre Dame de Lorette, by which the Duke of Savoy bound himself to send his daughter Mary Adelaide, at the age of eleven years, to France—in order to complete her education, and ultimately to become the wife of the Duke de Bourgoyne, the son of the dauphin, and consequently the probable heir to the French throne—that princess landed in her adopted country on the 16th October, 1696, and was conducted to the residence which had been prepared for her. Her new household had been awaiting her for six weeks at Lyons, when she arrived at the bridge of Beauvoisin, where she was to take leave of her Italian attendants; and on the second day after her landing, she was accordingly separated from all these familiar faces, with the exception of her physician and a solitary waiting-woman, and found herself in the midst of strangers; while even those two were only permitted to remain in her service until she was established at Versailles.

The general peace announced by the approaching arrival of the Princess of Savoy in France, had been signed three months previously at Riswick; and in the course of the following September, Louis XIV. had the mortification of finding himself compelled to abandon the interest of James II, and to recognise William of Orange as King of England. To the exiled monarch, however, the usurpation of his son-in-law now personally brought little regret; for, as though he had only awaited the confirmation of the intelligence to depose his crown

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

before he ceased to exist, he was shortly afterwards stricken with paralysis; and, although he still retained his mental faculties, his physical powers were prostrated.

At this fearful crisis, Louis XIV, forgetting for a time his systematic egotism, and desirous to fulfil to the last all the duties of a host, was unceasing in his attentions to the royal sufferer; an example which was followed by all the court. An attempt was made, by removing him to Bourbon-Archambault, to relieve, even if it were impossible to restore, the royal sufferer; and he accordingly proceeded there accompanied by the queen, and receiving throughout the journey all the honours due to his rank; but the result was unsuccessful; and, a few days after his return to St. Germain, he fell into a state of torpor which announced his approaching dissolution.

On the 13th of September, when Louis XIV. visited his sick bed, he had scarcely power to open his eyes on hearing him announced; but the French king, nevertheless, approached his pillow, and there solemnly assured him, in the presence of all his court, that he might die in peace as regarded his son the Prince of Wales, whom he should immediately recognise as the sovereign of Great Britain; a declaration which caused all the English nobility present to bend the knee, and earnestly express their gratitude; and, this ceremony over, Louis XIV. proceeded to the apartment of the queen, where he repeated the engagement into which he had entered, not only to herself, but also a third time to the Prince of Wales.

On the 16th September, at three o'clock in the afternoon, James II. breathed his last; and on the evening of the same day his body, almost unaccompanied, was conveyed to the convent of the English Benedictines at

Paris; where, without any more ceremony than if it had been that of a private individual, it was placed in charge of the brotherhood, and consigned to a lateral chapel, until it could be transported to England.

The formation of the household of the future Duchess de Bourgoyne had been a matter of some difficulty. The court had long ceased to possess either queen or dauphiness; and all the ladies of high rank were anxious to seize so favourable an opportunity of securing office. Anonymous letters, slander, and false statements, were rife; friendships were forgotten; rivalries were established; and Versailles awoke from its long trance into life and movement.

Louis XIV. had been, for some time, suffering very severely from a carbuncle in the neck, which had induced fever, and confined him to his bed; and during this attack Madame de Maintenon never quitted his side, save at the hours in which he persisted in transacting business, and thus had an admirable opportunity of privately arranging with the king all the details of the new establishment. She had at once resolved to be herself the principal instructress of the young princess, and to educate her entirely in accordance with her own peculiar principles; placing her sufficiently at her ease, however, to enable her to become an amusement to the monarch; but reserving the greater portion of her affection to herself, in order that when she emerged from girlhood, she might not rival her in influence. She had also a hope that, through her means, she might be enabled hereafter to acquire a hold upon the feelings of the Duke de Bourgoyne; and for this purpose she laboured to induce Louis XIV. to appoint none save persons who

were in her own interests, or from whose intellect and personal qualities she would have nothing to apprehend; in which attempt she entirely succeeded.[1]

At the very moment of the princess's landing, when her household were presented to her, and she had already began, according to the etiquette observed in the case of all merely foreign highnesses, to embrace the Duchess de Lude and the Count de Brienne, a courier arrived with an order from the king that the future duchess was to be received with all the honours due to a princess of the blood royal of France; and precisely as though she were already the wife of the Duke de Bourgoyne. The embraces in consequence terminated abruptly; and no other individual than those already named, were admitted to this familiarity.

In all the cities through which she passed she was welcomed by the authorities; and during the halts exacted by these ceremonies, she dined in public, waited upon by the Duchess de Lude, her lady of honour; but in the small towns all the ladies of her suite ate at her table. On the 4th of November, the king, the dauphin, and *Monsieur*, went to Montargis in separate carriages to meet her; and at six in the evening when she arrived, she was received by Louis XIV, who himself assisted her to alight, and led her to her apartment, where he presented her to MONSEIGNEUR, *Monsieur*, and the Duke de Chartres.

The little princess, who was full of animation and intelligence, had been admirably tutored by her father, and was quite conversant with the character of the king, and the principal personages of his court; a knowledge

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

of which she availed herself so skilfully, that she surprised and delighted all around her; while her high-breeding, self-possession, innate dignity, and respectful deportment towards himself, at once secured the affections of the monarch, who during the whole of the following day overwhelmed her with caresses; and in the evening despatched a courier to Madame de Maintenon to inform her how delighted he was with *their* grand-daughter.

On the morrow the royal party left Montargis, and at five o'clock arrived at Fontainebleau, where all the nobility were assembled on the horse-shoe staircase to receive them, while the court was thronged by the populace. When the carriages had drawn up, the king conducted the little princess, ("who looked," says St. Simon, "as though he had just taken her from his pocket,") first to the tribune, and subsequently to the state-apartments of the queen-mother, which had been appropriated to her; and where *Madame*, and all the ladies of the court in full dress were awaiting her entrance. Louis XIV. himself introduced to her the principal among the princes and princesses of the blood; and then retired, after deputing *Monsieur* to present the other persons present, and to be careful that she embraced such among them as had a right to that honour.

This arrangement made, the dauphin also retired; and *Monsieur*, placing himself beside the princess, named to her in succession not only the other princes and princesses of the blood, dukes and duchesses, marshals of France and their wives, and such ladies as were entitled to the privilege of the *tabouret*, and whom he directed her to embrace, but also all the nobility, male and female, who were permitted to kiss the hem of her robe. This cere-

mony lasted two hours; after which the young stranger supped alone in her room, where she was subsequently visited by Madame de Maintenon and the Princess de Conti. The following day she, in her turn, paid her respects to *Monsieur* and *Madame* in their own apartments, and to the dauphin in those of Madame de Conti, from all of whom she received costly presents; while, in addition to these, the king sent all the crown jewels to Madame de Mailly, her mistress of the robes, with an order that they might be made available for the adornment of the princess.

Louis XIV. also ordained that she should be addressed only as "Princess;" that she should eat alone, waited upon as before by the Duchess de Lude; that she should receive only the ladies of her own household, and those expressly admitted by himself; that she should hold no court; and that the Duke de Bourgoyne should only visit her once every fortnight, and his brothers once every month.

On the 8th of November the court returned to Versailles, where the princess took possession of the apartments of the late queen; and all such persons of rank as had not proceeded to Fontainebleau were presented in their turn; while in a very short time she became the idol of the king and Madame de Maintenon; whom, in default of any title of etiquette, she always addressed as "aunt;" observing towards her, nevertheless, a respectful deference which added a new charm to her graceful and affectionate familiarity.

A letter written by Madame de Maintenon at this period to the Duchess of Savoy, enclosing that which she had herself received from the king when at Montargis, will suffice to prove the impression produced by the young

princess upon both the one and the other. "The king," it said; "is enchanted with her; he expatiates on her deportment, her grace, her courtesy, her reserve, and her modesty; and Your Royal Highness is aware that he is not liberal of his praise. She has all the grace of girlhood, with the perfections of a more mature age. Her temper appears as perfect as her figure promises one day to become. She only requires to speak, in order to display the extent of her intellect. I dare not blend my own admiration with that which alone must be of value, but I cannot resist thanking Your Royal Highness for giving us a child who, according to all appearance, will be the delight of the court, and the glory of the century."[1]

The establishment of St. Cyr was eminently serviceable to Madame de Maintenon in forming the mind and haracter of the princess; and she was fortunate enough to inspire a great affection for its inmates, among whom she selected such as she considered to be the most eligible companions for her new charge, with care and judgment. Here she accustomed the docile girl to visit the stores, where she became conversant with the details of the internal economy of the house; the novices' apartment, where she imbibed principles of devotion and humility; and the school-rooms, in which she pursued her studies, and appeared delighted to escape from the trammels of her rank; performing all her duties, assisting those of others, and unlearning the vanity and indolence of Versailles.

In order, however, not to discourage or disgust the princess, by depriving her entirely of the pleasures suited to her youth, the theatrical representations of St.

[1] Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

Cyr were resumed; and Madame de Maintenon even carried her complaisance so far as to have a miniature stage erected in her own apartment, where the future duchess, and the Duke d'Orleans, performed in the company of such members of the court as possessed the talents of representation, under the direction of the famous actor Bâron.[1] Most of the tragedies of Duché,[2] the king's valet de chambre, were written for this little theatre; while the Abbé Genêt,[3] the almoner of the Duchess de Chartres, wrote those which were enacted by the Duchess du Maine and her court.[4]

As the princess advanced in age, and that the period of her marriage approached, Madame de Maintenon substituted for these girlish companions persons of more advanced age and refined minds, and thenceforth forbore all reprimands; but whenever she had failed in any of her duties, she was warned of the fact by the assumed

[1] Michel Bayron, otherwise Bâron, was a celebrated actor, and was alike the pupil and the friend of Molière. As an artist he appreciated himself most highly. "Every century," he was wont to say, "may produce a Cæsar; but it requires ten thousand to give birth to a Bâron." As an author he was less distinguished; although he wrote seven comedies, of which the best was *The Libertine*. He died in the year 1729, at the age of eighty-two.

[2] Joseph Francis Duché de Vancy, was a prolific poet; who never permitted himself to indulge in any satirical compositions, and was admitted a member of the Academy of Inscriptions. He left behind him three tragedies, *Jonathan*, *Absalom*, and *Deborah*, besides two ballets and three operas, of which the music was composed by Desmarais.

[3] Charles Claudius Genêt, legal secretary of the Duke du Maine, and member of the French Academy. His principal works are *Principles of Philosophy, or Natural Proofs of the Existence of God. and the Immortality of the Soul; Poems;* and several *Tragedies*, of which that of *Penelope* was esteemed his best.

[4] Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

gravity of those about her; while their evident satisfaction on every occasion upon which she had acquitted herself with credit, excited her to renewed exertion. Absent or present, Madame de Maintenon always interposed her influence to protect her against the evil examples of the court; and was unceasingly occupied in endeavouring to strengthen the happy dispositions with which she had been endowed by nature.

Louis XIV, more and more infatuated by the grace and amiability of the young princess, became at length so impatient for the marriage, that he decided upon its taking place on the day upon which she attained her twelfth year; and a short time previously he expressed his desire that the festivities should be of the most splendid description, and the court appear in its greatest magnificence; declaring that he should himself, upon this occasion, discard his usual dress, and wear the most sumptuous apparel.

This intimation was sufficient for the courtiers; and forthwith all who were to attend the ceremony, or who were included in the invitations, began to raise money by every means in their power, in order to fulfil his wishes. Gold and silver embroideries were discarded to make room for wreaths and bouquets of precious stones; tissues and velvets were scarcely esteemed worthy of selection; every jeweller in Paris disposed of his diamonds and pearls at a price never before contemplated; and the profusion finally became so unmeasured, that the king himself was alarmed by its excess; and declared that he could not understand how husbands were mad enough to suffer themselves to be ruined by the folly of their wives. It was, however, too late to counteract an evil

of which he had been the original cause, and which had become so perfect an epidemic, that workmen were at length wanting to execute the orders that poured in upon them. In this emergency the Duchess de Bourbon-Condé, who acknowledged no law save that of her own will, conceived the idea of carrying off eight individuals who were employed by the Duke de Rohan, in order that her own costume might be completed; but the king was no sooner informed of the circumstance than he caused them immediately to be restored.

The anticipation of this marriage aroused the court from its lethargy. The prospect of novelty was refreshing after a constant routine of amusements which had long become wearisome, and which had consisted of a monotonous succession of cards, drives, hunts, and concerts; and presented none of those agreeable varieties which excited the emulation of the courtiers, and gratified the curiosity of the people.

The dauphin lived at Meudon in the same uniform manner as the king existed at Versailles; and Mademoiselle Choin, whom he had liberated from her convent despite the efforts which had been made to estrange his regard, enacted at his court the same personage as Madame de Maintenon presented at that of Louis XIV. Their marriage was, even after the death of the dauphin, never clearly substantiated; but it is asserted that on one occasion when the prince was conversing with his father, he so far conquered his constitutional timidity as to enlarge upon the good qualities of Mademoiselle Choin; and on discovering that by so doing he excited neither surprise nor displeasure, terminated his eulogium by requesting permission to make her his wife;

upon which the king, as he abruptly turned away and retired into his cabinet, desired him to consider well what he was about to do, and never again to speak to him upon the subject.[1]

That the dauphin profited by this forbearance there can be little doubt, for some time subsequently Mademoiselle Choin occupied an arm-chair at Meudon in the presence of the prince himself, while the princesses were simply accommodated with folding seats; and it was remarked that she not only addressed the Duchess de Bourgoyne familiarly, but even harshly; occasionally contradicting her, and taking exception at her dress, her manner, or her conduct, with the same cool and caustic authority which Madame de Maintenon had previously exercised over the daughters of the king. The actual position of Mademoiselle Choin was, however, still more clearly defined during a dangerous illness which occurred to the dauphin, when she established herself by his bed-side, with the full knowledge and concurrence of the king; who far from condemning this public demonstration, and commanding her to leave the palace, as was usual upon such occasions, requested Madame de Maintenon to visit her during the progress of the indisposition.[2]

The Duke de Bourgoyne was at this period in his fifteenth year, and was the ward of the Duke de Beauvilliers, and the pupil of Fénélon; who had, in devoting themselves to his education, undertaken a task of no common difficulty, the young prince having been born with natural dispositions, which caused all about him to tremble for the results. Passionate to a degree which induced

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

[2] Mémoires de St. Simon.

him to destroy the clocks when they struck the hour that compelled him to some occupation to which he was averse, and to throw himself into the most violent paroxysms of rage if the rain chanced to interfere with his amusements, all opposition rendered him furious, and only tended to increase his desire for whatever was interdicted. Earnest and eager in the pursuit of all that bore the name of pleasure, he equally loathed everything which involved restraint or submission. With a keen perception of the ridiculous, he was merciless in his raillery, which wounded the more cruelly, from the wit and spirit with which it was universally applied; while impatient to impetuosity, he never, during his boyhood, succeeded in learning anything singly, but endeavoured by attempting several studies at the same time, to master them all by one common exertion. His most dangerous quality was, however, the pride which he felt in the facility with which he was enabled to seize the weak point of an argument, and to embarrass his tutors by captious questions; but he had no sooner succeeded in so doing, than, conscious of the want of generosity of which he had been guilty, he was the first to expatiate upon the unworthiness of his conduct; and to upbraid himself with a violence even more culpable than his original fault.

Nevertheless, despite all these imperfections, his keen and searching intellect, his perseverance against difficulty, and his ambition to become an accomplished gentleman, enabled him to complete his education with the most brilliant results; while religion and matured reason rendered him in after years the very reverse of what he had been in his boyhood, and made him as remarkable for his virtues, as he had formerly been for his defects.[1]

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

The marriage of the young and royal pair took place on the 7th of December, and was celebrated with the greatest magnificence in the chapel of Versailles, at six o'clock in the evening. The little princess already gave promise of the fascination which subsequently rendered her so eminently attractive; and possessed a figure which was rapidly becoming tall and majestic, large eyes of the most brilliant black, an animated Italian physiognomy, and the charming complexion of early youth.

The personal appearance of the duke was less prepossessing, for he was plain, and moreover deformed. The Duke de Beauvilliers, his governor, accounted for this defect by imputing it to the use of an iron bar which he had been compelled to carry while a youth, in order to make him upright; but to avoid whose weight he had thrown himself on one side, and thus engendered a habit which had ultimately destroyed his figure.

The court festivals consequent upon this premature marriage exceeded in magnificence all that had been previously witnessed at Versailles; but the rejoicings did not extend beyond the gates of the palace. The people looked with a jealous and reproachful eye upon the lavish expenditure and reckless profusion of the aristocracy; and remembered, as they listened to the chiming of bells and the booming of cannon, that the peace which had so recently been concluded, had somewhat shorn the glory of Louis XIV. of its beams; and thus, while the courtiers were intoxicating themselves with pleasure, the inhabitants of Paris remained serious and impassive.

Little, however, did the glittering tenants of Versailles care to remark a fact so unimportant; and during several weeks the long avenue conducting to the capital was alive by night as well as day with gilded equipages,

prancing steeds, and blazing torches; while within the palace, plays, concerts, operas, balls, and lotteries followed each other in quick succession. Three days after the marriage the king himself held an assembly, where the sumptuousness of the costumes was carried to an extreme hitherto unattempted. The courtiers, as well as the ladies, were covered with jewels; while, in order that the diamonds of the court-dames might produce a more dazzling effect, it was decided that they should all appear in dresses of black velvet; and the result of this arrangement in the great gallery of Versailles, illuminated on that occasion by four thousand wax-lights, was of the most striking and magnificent description. The young Duchess de Bourgoyne, the heroine of the festival, wore jewels to the amount of ten thousand pistoles upon her apron alone.

The ball was succeeded by a collation of so costly a description as to prove that neither adverse seasons nor ungenial climates can withstand the power of gold. A number of tables, which were transported as if by magic into the gallery, presented to the delighted eyes of the wondering guests a variety of flower-beds, redolent of the rarest and richest blossoms; while others supported trees covered with exotic fruits, whence escaped at intervals flights of singing birds. This ingenious representation of the two brightest seasons of the year, was followed by the apparition of a hundred moveable sideboards, covered with every delicacy which could tempt the palate; and the attendants upon these accumulated dainties were already in full activity, when it was discovered that among the guests of majesty were comprised certain individuals, who, more keenly alive to the delights of gain than to the indulgence of epicureanism, were possessing

themselves of the jewels of their neighbours to an excess which threatened to create considerable consternation among the losing party.

The mortification of Louis XIV. upon being apprised of this disgraceful fact was extreme; and he forthwith desired a number of the noblemen present to disperse themselves among the crowd, in order, if possible, to detect the delinquents; and, shortly afterwards, the Chevalier de Sully chancing to be attracted by the movements of a gorgeously attired individual, who was, as he remarked, constantly endeavouring to force himself through the very centre of the throng, determined to watch his proceedings; nor was it long ere he observed him in the act of cutting away a portion of the dress of the young princess, in order to possess himself of a diamond clasp by which it was ornamented. M. de Sully lost no time in beckoning to his assistance a couple of his coadjutors; when, without troubling themselves to ascertain the identity of their captive, the three young men hurried their prisoner to the private closet of the king, according to their instructions, and immediately hastened to inform His Majesty of the result of their zeal; upon which Louis XIV. himself retired for an instant from the glittering crowd, and upon entering his cabinet was painfully startled to find himself confronted with one of the greatest nobles of his court.

The dialogue which ensued between the offended monarch and the dishonoured courtier was cold and brief; and was at length terminated by Louis XIV, who said contemptuously: "Enough, Sir; more than enough; I perceive that you desired to wear the costly attire in which you now stand gratuitously. Leave the palace on the instant; I at once despise and pardon you."

Another incident also occurred during these marriage festivities which is too characteristic to be passed over in silence. Among the diversions of the time few were followed up with more zest than the gaming table; and it chanced that on one occasion, in the royal apartments, MONSEIGNEUR played with so extraordinary a run of good fortune, that he at length turned laughingly to the Marquis d'Antin,[1] and desired him to seat himself at his side, and to hold his hat, in order that he might endeavour to fill it.

This arrangement was no sooner made in the same jesting spirit as it had been conceived, than the dauphin, whose luck appeared exhaustless, began to throw the gold by handfuls into his plumed beaver; but after he had passed about half an hour in this pleasant occupation, he was astonished to perceive that, despite all his exertions, the improvised purse was not more than a quarter full; "I thought I had been richer;" was his remark as he resumed his cards; "However, we will continue our game."

Fortune still favoured the dauphin, but the hoard did not visibly increase; and, finally, MONSEIGNEUR having turned round somewhat suddenly, saw the marquis busy in transferring the glittering coins from the royal hat to his own pockets; he however made no observation on the circumstance, but shortly afterwards rose from the table, exclaiming: "That will suffice for to-night; and now let me see what I have won."

So saying, he led M. d'Antin into the recess of a window, and striking upon the pockets of the delinquent with the back of his hand, he heard the pleasant sound of his own gold pieces; upon which he remarked with

[1] The legitimate son of the Marquis de Montespan.

somewhat ironical gaiety: "Thank you, my good fellow; you were right to fill your pockets, for assuredly my hat could not have held all my gains."

The son of the discarded favourite profited by the forbearance of the good-natured prince, disgorged his ill-gotten hoard, and escaped without the additional mortification of a public exposure.[1]

From the first moment in which the Duke de Bourgoyne saw the princess Marie-Adelaide, he became warmly attached to her, and subsequently carried this love almost to adoration. Some days after his marriage, during one of the visits which he was authorized by the king to make to his bride, she confided to him the fact that a celebrated astrologer of Turin who had drawn her horoscope, had foretold everything that had since occurred to her, even that she should marry a French prince; and that he had concluded by predicting that she would die in her twenty-seventh year.

"And if I should indeed be so unfortunate;" said the little princess; "who shall you next marry, sir?"

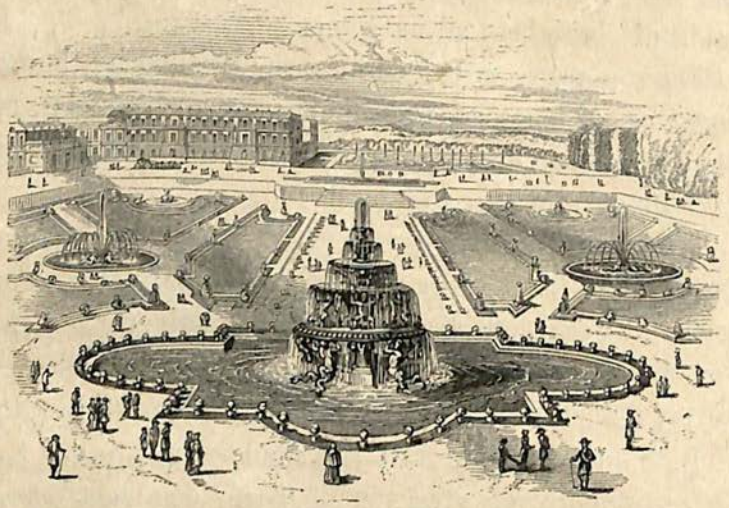
"It is an useless speculation;" answered the young duke, "for if you die before me I shall not survive you a week."

He was as true a prophet as the Turinese astrologer.

Meanwhile the Duchess de Bourgoyne increased in personal graces and amiability of character, as she advanced in years, and became, like the unfortunate Henrietta of England, at once the idol and the model of the court; while all the nation anticipated at a future period such a government under her husband, as should realize the dreams of antiquity.

They were ignorant of the prophecy.

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.



CHAPTER XII.

THE SPANISH SUCCESSION—DEATH OF LEOPOLD OF BAVARIA—THE DUKE D'ANJOU CALLED TO THE THRONE OF SPAIN—DECLARATION OF INNOCENT XII.—DEATH OF CHARLES II. OF SPAIN—READING OF THE WILL—THE DUKE D'ABRANTES—PRESENTATION OF THE DUKE D'ANJOU TO THE FRENCH COURT AS KING OF SPAIN—LEAVE-TAKING AT MEUDON—MADAME DE MONTESPAN AND THE KING—LITERARY DEATHS AT THE CLOSE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY—RACINE'S LAST MISTAKE—JEAN BAPTISTE ROUSSEAU—BIRTH OF VOLTAIRE.

CHARLES II. of Spain, whose health was broken, and who was hopeless of an heir, had selected as his successor Leopold of Bavaria, a prince of five years of age; and his will was no sooner made, than the Cardinal Porto-Carrero secretly informed the Marquis d'Harcourt, the French ambassador, of the fact; who immediately despatched a messenger to Louis XIV. with the intelligence.

The French king learnt this decision without exhibiting any symptoms of annoyance; but the Emperor of Germany was less philosophic; and as the court of Austria had already been accused of ridding itself by poison of the Queen of Spain, the daughter of *Monsieur*, it was no

sooner announced that the young Prince of Bavaria had followed her to the grave than the same accusations were renewed.

At the death of the infant prince Charles found himself more embarrassed than before; when Porto-Carrero suggested to him the substitution of Philip d'Anjou, the brother of the Duke de Bourgoyne, and grandson of the King of France; but the monarch feared to take upon himself the responsibility of bequeathing his kingdom to the descendant of a sovereign who had publicly renounced his claims to the succession on his marriage with a Spanish princess; and resolved to consult the Pope before he ventured upon such a measure.

Innocent XII, who was at that period in a dying state, replied upon the instant, stating that being like His Catholic Majesty suffering from a mortal illness, he had an interest as great and as imperative as his own, in giving him such advice as should exempt him from all reproach at the awful tribunal before which he must soon appear; and considered that, to the exclusion of the house of Austria, the children of the Dauphin of France were the true, only, and legitimate heirs to his monarchy; that they superseded all others; and that so long as they or any of their posterity were in existence, no Austrian had any claim to the Spanish throne; while the more considerable the inheritance, the more he was bound not to commit the crime of alienating it from the legitimate heir; and that he consequently entreated him not to omit any precaution to ensure justice to those to whom it was due; but to secure, in so far as it was possible, the undivided succession of his monarchy to one of the French princes.

This negociation was conducted with so much secrecy

that it was only after the accession of Philip V. that the interference of the Pope became public.

On the receipt of so positive a reply, all the scruples of Charles II. were removed. His previous will was immediately burnt in the presence of his confessor; and a new one was drawn up, wherein Philip d'Anjou was declared absolute heir to the crown and kingdom of Spain; which, in the event of his demise, were to devolve to the Duke de Berri, the third son of the dauphin; and, he failing, to the Archduke Charles; with the reservation as regarded the two first that they should not unite in their own persons the sovereignties of France and Spain; and in that of the third that he should renounce all claim to the empire of Germany if he ever became heir to the Spanish throne; while it was, moreover, finally decreed, that if, by any extraordinary concatenation of events, neither of these three princes should be enabled to claim the bequest of Charles II, it should devolve upon the Duke of Savoy without any restriction whatever.

The precaution was well-timed; for shortly afterwards Charles lost the use of his faculties; and the Duke d'Harcourt received orders to depart from Madrid, leaving M. de Blécourt as chargé d'affairs, to defend the French interests at that court; and to proceed to Barcelona, where a body of troops had already been stationed, ready, at the first signal, to march into Spain.

On the 1st of November Charles II. expired; and he was no sooner ascertained to be dead than his will was opened. The secret of the succession had been so scrupulously kept, that the mystery and importance of the event which was about to occur had attracted all the inhabitants of the city to the palace and its neigh-

bourhood. Every foreign minister had exerted his interest to be admitted to the council; all the doors, both public and private, were besieged alike by ambassadors and courtiers; and every one was anxious to be the foremost to proclaim the important tidings.

The first person who left the apartment in which the will had been opened, was the Duke d'Abrantes; who, after having looked around him for an instant on the anxious faces by which the anterooms were thronged, said gravely: "Gentlemen, the Duke d'Anjou is now King of Spain. Long live Philip V.!"

And then making his way through the astonished crowd, he disappeared.

On the morning of the 9th of November the despatch of M. de Blécourt was delivered to the Marquis de Barbésieux, who immediately proceeded to communicate its contents to Louis XIV. The king, who was preparing for a shooting excursion, countermanded his orders; and without making any remark, retired to his cabinet, after which he dined alone as usual, simply announcing, during the repast, that he had received intelligence of the death of the King of Spain, in consequence of which there would be neither drawing-rooms, theatrical representations, nor any other amusement at court throughout the winter; but he had no sooner concluded his repast than he sent to desire that the minister would wait upon him at three o'clock in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon; while a second summons was forwarded to the dauphin.

The council sat till seven; after which the king transacted business for three hours with two of the ministers.

On the following day two more councils were held

in the same apartment; and, even habituated as the court had become to the favour of Madame de Maintenon, it was not without surprise that they saw her thus almost publicly assist at a deliberation upon the most important subject which throughout the extended reign of Louis XIV. had been submitted to a council of state.

All, however, remained in mystery and doubt until the morning of the 14th; when the ambassador of Spain was summoned to an audience at Versailles on the following day, where the king presented his grandson to him in his cabinet, saying: "This, Sir, is the Duke d'Anjou, whom you may salute as your king."

At this announcement the ambassador flung himself upon his knees, and made a long harangue to the young prince in his native tongue, at the conclusion of which Louis XIV. remarked courteously: "My grandson, Sir, does not yet understand your language, which will so soon become his own; I must therefore reply to you in his name;" and as he ceased speaking, contrary to his usual custom, he ordered that both the battants of the door should be thrown back; and permitted all who were in the saloon to enter his cabinet. The crowd was consequently great, for the whole court was in a state of excitement and curiosity; and order was no sooner restored, than the monarch, throwing his left arm about the neck of the young prince, and pointing towards him with his right hand, said in a tone of emotion:—

"Gentlemen, this is the King of Spain. His birth called him to a crown; the late king has recognised this right by his will; all the nation desires his succession, and has entreated it at my hands. It is the will of Heaven, to which I conform with satisfaction."

Then turning towards his grandson, he addressed him emphatically with the words; "Be a good Spaniard; but nevertheless, although this will henceforth be your first duty, never forget that you were born a Frenchman, in order to maintain the union of the two nations; it is the only means whereby you will render them happy, and maintain the peace of Europe."

This done, the two younger princes[1] were introduced; when they embraced each other several times with tears in their eyes, and every evidence of sincere affection.

Their grief was, however, of short duration; for the Duke d'Anjou, delighted to be liberated at the age of seventeen from the restraints to which he had been previously subjected, no sooner found himself once more alone with his brothers than he abandoned himself to the most exuberant gaiety, and expressed his delight at the prospect which had opened before him. "So I am King of Spain!" he exclaimed joyously; "and my brother Burgundy will be one day King of France. You are the only one, my poor Berri, who must live and die a subject."

"That fact will not grieve me;" replied the little prince; "I shall have less trouble and more pleasure than either of you; with the right of hunting both in France and Spain, and following a wolf from Paris to Madrid."

A few days subsequently the Spanish ambassador received a letter, which he communicated to a select number of his friends; and which contained the intelligence that a month before his death Charles II. had conceived a melancholy desire to see once more the remains

[1] The Duke de Bourgoyne and the Duke de Berri.

of his father, his mother, and his first wife, the unfortunate Maria Louisa of Orleans. In vain did the court physicians expostulate, and represent to the monarch the fatal effects which might be consequent upon such a spectacle in his impaired state of health; the influence of this morbid longing was too powerful to be controlled; and the tombs of the three illustrious personages whom he indicated were accordingly opened; a fact which was no sooner announced to Charles, than, leaning upon the arm of the Cardinal Porto-Carrero, supported on the other side by the Count de Monterey, and followed by his confessor, he slowly proceeded towards the gloomy vault tenanted by his ancestors.

The way wound down an almost imperceptible slope arched overhead; and along this highroad to the faded glories of the past, the monarch, who was so soon to lay down his own among them, passed slowly and feebly forward, with trembling knees and labouring breath, sinking beneath a vague sense of terror which numbed the slight remains of his already failing strength; but at length the pilgrimage was ended; and he stood among the shadows of spent centuries—among shivered sceptres and broken shields. A score of enamelled lamps, suspended above the long line of monuments surmounted by their kneeling or reclining effigies, cast a pale and sepulchral gleam over the sculptured marble; and a close and fetid odour—that savour of death which not even the gums of Arabia or the spices of the East can wholly counteract, and which breathes into the nostrils of the living the atmosphere of mortality—appeared to float about the pendent lights, and to cling in vapoury clouds around the lofty tombs.

Charles II, panting, pale, and awe-struck, ultimately paused before a sarcophagus indicated by his confessor; who said in a hoarse whisper: "Sire; you desired to look once more upon Philip IV. He lies before you."

The dying king bent for an instant over the withered body of his father ere he gasped out: "May your rest be indeed as deep as it appears. Perchance I may have irritated your spirit by bequeathing inconsiderately the kingdom which I inherited from your hand. Speak, Philip! are you satisfied with me?"

"Charles!" exclaimed the stern monk at his side; "beware of sacrilege. Ask no questions of the dead. Silence is the privilege of the tomb; which must speak only to the eyes, and to the soul. Its best lesson is that example of the nothingness of human vanity which you now see before you. Profit by it, and pray."

"I humble myself before God;" replied the king submissively; and then, after having embraced the remains of his father, he murmured: "Now lead me to my mother."

"She sleeps beneath this arch," said the confessor.

Again Charles bent down to gaze upon a dead parent; but this time he started back appalled, and covering his eyes with his hands, gasped out: "Merciful heavens! she yet scowls upon me! Her face still bears the impress of the anger with which she first heard me aver that I was about to transfer the sceptre of Spain to her own family, unhappily become her enemies. Mother, forgive me! I had indeed obeyed your will; but the Prince of Bavaria is now, like yourself, the tenant of a tomb. Farewell, mother! may your troubled spirit be appeased." And the unfortunate prince pressed his pale

lips to the fleshless cheek of the skeleton, ere he turned towards the next tomb before which his confessor paused.

It was that of the ill-fated Maria Louisa of Orleans, who had been cut off in her youth, her beauty, and her tenderness, by the hand of a secret assassin; and who now lay wasted and ghastly in her shroud. "And this, then;" said Charles, as he lifted from the livid brow a portion of its velvet covering; "this, then, is all that is left of the loveliness by which I was once thralled! Of the wife who was once my idol!" As he continued to gaze earnestly upon the mouldering remains, a convulsive shudder passed over his frame; and raising himself suddenly, he asked in a hoarse whisper, "Who talked of poison?"

"No one, decidedly, Sire;" eagerly answered the cardinal with a blenched lip. "In the name of heaven let me entreat Your Majesty to leave this place, and return to the palace."

"No, no;" said Charles, whose agitation visibly increased; "I heard the word distinctly; a fearful reproach was murmured from the coffin of my wife. Leave me to tell her how I loved her—how I mourned for her—let me embalm her cold remains with my tears; and yield up my own spirit by her side."

"Forget not that although a monarch you are still a Christian;" said his confessor, in a cold hard accent which formed a strange contrast with the impassioned anguish of the unhappy king; "profane not the dwelling of the dead with the thoughts and the words of sin;" and he grasped the arm of his penitent to lead him away.

"Close the tomb of my mother!" exclaimed Charles,

as he shook off the clasp, and raised himself to his full height; "I will look on her no more. Maria Louisa! victim of hate—of poison. Ah, close my mother's tomb!" And as he repeated these words in a faint scream, exhausted by sickness, fatigue, and emotion, he fell senseless over an empty sarcophagus which yawned cold and void beside him.

"It is his own;" said the monk, unmoved by the melancholy spectacle; while the cardinal, raising the insensible monarch in his arms, desired the attendants to bear him carefully from the vault; and a few moments subsequently the melancholy procession retrod the gloomy passage even more silently than it had been previously traversed; and conveyed Charles to the chamber which he was never again to leave with life. In another month he lay in the narrow tomb which had before received him for an instant in mimic death.[1]

This letter created considerable sensation in the circle to which it was confided, but it was soon forgotten amid newer and gayer interests; for ere long the court was in movement, preparing for the departure of Philip V. to assume his new throne, which it was determined by Louis XIV. should take place early in December, under the escort of his brothers, who had requested and obtained permission to accompany him to the frontier; while he was to be, moreover, attended by the Duke de Beauvilliers and the Marshal de Noailles, together with the greater portion of the young nobility, who all claimed the privilege of rendering him this last honour.[2]

It was, however, previously arranged that on the

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

[2] Mémoires de St. Simon.

second of the month the boy-king should proceed to Meudon to take a formal leave of his father; a ceremony at which all the court of the dauphin were commanded to be present.

The Duchess du Maine, the natural sister of MONSEIGNEUR, who possessed great influence over his mind, entreated him to invite Madame de Montespan to join the circle on this occasion, and to take leave of the King of Spain with the rest of the court; a request which the dauphin readily conceded, as it enabled him to effect two measures that were equally agreeable to his feelings: to oblige the duchess, and to annoy Madame de Maintenon; whom he had not only never received as his guest, but into whose apartments he had never entered, save on the solitary occasion when he was compelled to attend the council.

Madame de Montespan had for several years entirely disappeared from the court, where her apparition had become a reproach, and, consequently, an annoyance to the king; and where she had never received any encouragement to present herself; but her curiosity was so much excited by all that she had heard of the Duchess de Bourgoyne, and she was so anxious to be brought into immediate contact with her, that she at once accepted the invitation, and prepared to attend the ceremony.

In compliance with the established etiquette, a list of the persons who were present at Meudon was delivered to the monarch on his arrival, which he read attentively throughout; after which he folded the paper with a look of perfect indifference, and thrust it into his pocket.

As the guards, by whom he was always preceded, announced him at the door of the apartment, Madame de Montespan tottered, and was anxious to withdraw,

but she was restrained by one of her friends; and at that precise moment the young Duchess de Bourgoyne, who was probably anxious to observe the effect which the sight of his old favourite would produce upon the king, approached the Duchess du Maine, who was seated beside her mother, and entered into conversation with her.

In the next instant Louis XIV. entered the room. He first addressed himself to the Spanish minister, who was in attendance upon his new sovereign; and having so done, he made the tour of the apartment, and requested the ladies to resume their seats; then, pausing before the Duchess de Bourgoyne, he conversed with her for a moment; subsequently addressed a few words to the Duchess du Maine; and ultimately found himself opposite Madame de Montespan, who, pale and trembling, had great trouble to prevent herself from fainting. The king looked at her steadfastly for a moment, and then, with a courteous gesture, calmly said: "I congratulate you, Madam; you are still as handsome and as attractive as ever; but that is not all; I hope that you are also happy."

"At this moment, Sire;" replied the discarded favourite; "I am very happy, since I have the honour of presenting my respectful homage to Your Majesty."

As she ceased speaking, the king took her hand and pressed it to his lips; after which he continued his progress round the circle.

This was the last time that Madame de Montespan ever saw Louis XIV.[1]

Meanwhile all the European powers, with the exception of Austria, had recognised the Duke d'Anjou as King of

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

Spain; and he had been proclaimed at Madrid amid the acclamations of the people.

At the close of the seventeenth century, France found herself shorn of much of her intellectual splendour. In 1662 she had lost Boisrobert; in 1666 Mansard; in 1684 Corneille; in 1688 Quinault; in 1695 La Fontaine; in 1696 La Bruyère; in 1699 Racine; and in 1700 Le Nôtre. Of these celebrated men many had, however, already outlived their favour. Boisrobert, the favourite of Richelieu, a sensualist to the last, passed out of the world almost unnoticed; Mansard, of whose pretensions the king had long been weary, was not only unregretted, but afforded a welcome relief to the whole court by his decease; Corneille, whose fine powers had become extinguished by extreme old age, had for years ceased to appear in the world; Quinault, who had been the originator of the lyrical drama in France, died in peace, richly pensioned, and a member of the Academy; La Fontaine, after having by his improvidence rendered himself dependent upon his friends for the space of more than twenty years, put forth a public protest against his *Tales*, and other immoral productions, expired in a state of intellectual childishness, and was discovered to have worn a shirt of hair-cloth under his linen; La Bruyère, the celebrated moralist, who had been Historical Tutor to Louis de Bourbon, the grandson of the great Condé, in whose household he remained until his death, and where he published his celebrated "*Characters*," was received into the Academy in 1693, and when at Paris in 1696, suddenly discovered, while surrounded by an assemblage of learned men, that he had totally lost his hearing; upon which he returned instantly to Versailles;

but he had not been a quarter of an hour in his apartment, when apoplexy supervened, and he became a corpse.[1]

Three years subsequently La Bruyère was followed to the tomb by Racine; whose death is asserted to have been hastened by an imprudence, through which he forfeited for ever the joint favour of the monarch and Madame de Maintenon, at a period when he had become so utterly dependent upon court popularity, that he could not survive its loss; an incident which is thus related by contemporaneous chroniclers.

The office of Historiographer to the King, which he held conjointly with Despreaux, and the facilities which it afforded him of securing the friendship of all the most distinguished of the nobility, had acquired for Racine what were then designated great *privacies* at court; so much so indeed, that (as we have elsewhere recorded) when he had no public business to transact, Louis XIV, during the long evenings of winter, frequently desired the attendance of the dramatist in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, in order that he might report to him the progress of the work upon which he was then engaged, and amuse him by his conversation.

Unfortunately for the courtier-poet, he was, like many others of his craft, subject to occasional fits of absence; and it chanced that in one of these confidential discourses, the king, after having questioned him upon the state of the opera until the topic was exhausted, turned to that of the general drama, and inquired if he could assign any cause for its visible decline in Paris. Racine, who

[1] Œuvres de l'Abbé d'Olivet.

did not dare to confess that the fact of His Majesty having himself abandoned the theatres had destroyed much of the emulation which had previously existed, cited several reasons for the defalcation; and among others the paucity of living dramatists, which, he wound up his argument by declaring, had compelled the managers to fall back upon exhausted pieces, and particularly upon the farces of Scarron, which were good for nothing, and disgusted all their audiences.

As the words escaped his lips, the blood mounted to the brow of Madame de Maintenon, before whom the name of her late husband had not been pronounced during the last fifteen years; while the king was so startled, and remained silent for so long a period, that the unfortunate poet, on looking up, and perceiving the consternation which was visible upon both countenances, suddenly became conscious of his indiscretion, and dropped his eyes in the most painful confusion.

After a few seconds passed in this mental torture, he was, however, released by the monarch himself, who coldly remarked that M. Racine was at liberty to withdraw, as he had some business to transact, and wished to be alone; an order which was no sooner given than the dramatist, so bewildered that he scarcely retained sufficient self-possession to make his parting obeisances, hurriedly left the apartment, to reflect in solitude upon the probable consequences of his ill-timed abstraction.

There was, however, no remedy for such an imprudence; and thenceforward the king not only excluded Racine from his confidence and favour, but to the day of his death neither himself, nor Madame de Maintenon, ever again honoured him by a word, or even a look; while from

that moment the poet, to whom court-favour had been for many years the very key-stone of existence, fell into a state of melancholy which ultimately brought him to the grave.

The next man of celebrity who "shuffled off the mortal coil" was Le Notre; while Boileau, Jean Baptiste Rousseau, and Fénélon alone remained, of all the bright galaxy which had illuminated the intellectual horizon during the youth of Louis XIV; and even of these, Boileau was only destined to survive until the year 1711; while Jean Baptiste Rousseau, although he lived forty years longer, was yet dead to France.

The life of this unfortunate poet was one long and melancholy romance. Gifted with poetical powers of a high order, he had scarcely emerged from college when he acquired a great reputation, which was, however, counterbalanced by a host of enemies, some of whom finally accused him as the writer of some libellous verses; of which he, however, affirmed that Saurin was the actual author. It would appear, nevertheless, that he failed in procuring proofs of the fact; for, on the trial which ensued, he was convicted of having suborned his witnesses, and for this crime was banished for life in 1712.

Pursued by misfortune, he for a time dragged on a miserable existence, first in Switzerland, where his only friend was the Count de Luc, the French ambassador; then at Vienna, under the protection of Prince Eugène; and finally at Brussels, where he died in extreme poverty, declaring in his last moments that he was innocent of the libel which had been attributed to him.

The author of Telemachus had meanwhile long preceded him to the grave, having died in 1712 at his diocese, full

of years and virtues, regretted alike for his high talent, and his universal charity; and to replace all these great names, only one star of magnitude had arisen on the intellectual horizon; but it was that of Voltaire, whose birth took place in the year 1694.

CHAPTER XIII.

POLITICAL POSITION OF FRANCE—ILLNESS OF THE DAUPHIN—LES DAMES DE LA HALLE—A NEW CAMPAIGN—AFFRONT TO THE DUKE DE CHARTRES—HIS INCREASED LIBERTINAGE—REGAL RETORTS—QUARREL OF THE KING AND MONSIEUR—INDISPOSITION OF MONSIEUR—HIS DEATH—TERROR OF MADAME—INTERVIEW BETWEEN LOUIS XIV. AND THE DUKE DE CHARTRES—WANT OF FEELING OF THE KING—GRIEF OF THE DUCHESS DE BOURGOYNE—THE BRELAN TABLE—NOVEL POSITION OF THE DUKE DE CHARTRES—LATE COURT OF MONSIEUR—MADAME, AND MADAME DE MAINTENON.

THE accession of the Duke d'Anjou to the throne of Spain had meanwhile destroyed the equilibrium of Europe; and William III, then recently dead, but even beyond the grave the most resolute enemy of Louis XIV, had bequeathed to him the new league which bore the name of the Great Alliance, and which had for its aim to place the Spanish crown upon the head of the Archduke Charles, the son of the Emperor of Germany; or, in default of dispossessing Philip V. of his kingdom, to trace round the two nations of France and Spain a limit which should never be overpassed by the ambition of either.

Menaced on all sides, Louis XIV. accordingly found himself once more compelled to sustain a war against the European powers; and preparations for hostilities had already commenced when Versailles was again convulsed by new terrors.

On the night of the 19th of March, 1701, the king, while at prayers at Marly previously to retiring to rest, was startled by hearing a confusion in his cabinet, accom-

panied by inquiries for his physician and surgeon. The dauphin had suddenly been attacked by severe indisposition. He had passed the day at Meudon, where he had partaken only of a slight luncheon; but at the royal supper had eaten immensely of fish, and immediately retired to his apartment, after having taken leave of the king in his closet. He had, however, scarcely terminated his prayer, and seated himself in an arm-chair, in order that his valets might undress him, when he fainted; and his attendants, and such of the courtiers as were in his apartments, had hastened in their terror to those of the king to summon assistance. Louis XIV, half disrobed as he was, lost not a moment in hastening by a dark, narrow, and inconvenient staircase to the chamber of his son, whither he was accompanied by the Duchess de Bourgoyne, who had also been alarmed by the outcry. They found MONSEIGNEUR in a state of extreme suffering, contending against Felix, who persisted in bleeding him, in which attempt he at length fortunately succeeded; and efficient remedies being subsequently applied, the royal invalid was in a few hours declared convalescent, although the attack proved sufficiently violent to confine him during several days to his bed.

The dauphin was very popular in Paris, where he frequently appeared at the opera, and also conciliated the populace by the affability of his deportment: and on this occasion the *Dames de la Halle*,[1] being anxious to testify their attachment to his person, deputed four of their principal members to proceed to the palace, to inquire in person into the progress of His Royal Highness's con-

[1] Fishwomen of Paris.

valescence. When they arrived the dauphin ordered them to be admitted to his chamber; upon which the most enthusiastic of the deputation rushed to his bedside, threw their arms about his neck, and kissed him on both cheeks; while the others, more moderate in their demonstrations, contented themselves by kissing his hand. They were warmly welcomed, conducted over the palace, and ultimately entertained to dinner; while MONSEIGNEUR presented them on their departure with a sum of money, to which another was added by the king; and they were so much gratified with the honours which had been lavished upon them, that they commanded a *Te Deum* at St. Eustache, and afterwards gave a grand entertainment, in commemoration of the event.

Meanwhile the organization of the troops had been completed; and the command of those destined for Flanders given to the Marshal de Boufflers; while those against Germany were to serve under the Marshal de Villeroi. The Duke de Bourgoyne had been originally named to the command of the latter, but the appointment was subsequently cancelled, in consequence of the undisguised annoyance of *Monsieur* that the offer of his son to serve in this campaign had been rejected.

The king had, indeed, consented to the suggestion merely in the hope of what actually ensued; feeling convinced that *Monsieur*, piqued that no command had been given to the Duke de Chartres, would not accede to such an arrangement, and, therefore, made it dependent upon his approval; but both *Monsieur* and the Duke de Chartres at once felt that if they consented to accept a less distinguished position in this campaign, it would not be possible to refuse the latter, at his age, the command

of an army in the following year; and they, consequently, decided that they would overlook the slight. Louis XIV, who, for this very reason, had been averse to accepting the services of his nephew, was accordingly both astonished and embarrassed when he found that *Monsieur*, as well as his son, agreed to such a sacrifice; but his will proved stronger than his vexation; and once more he positively refused to permit the Duke de Chartres to join the army. He did not, however, by these means escape the mortifications from which he shrank; for the young duke, at once indignant and exasperated at a pertinacity which destroyed all his hopes of military renown, abandoned himself to an open career of libertinage, which angered and perplexed the monarch in a greater degree than ever.

The position was one of considerable embarrassment, even to Louis XIV, who was at some loss how to act towards a nephew whom he had compelled to become his son-in-law; and towards whom, save in the writings of the bond, he had falsified every promise; while as regarded *Monsieur*, this new affront aroused the old grievance of the government of Brittany, which was one of the pledges of the marriage contract, and which had never been redeemed; while *Madame*, justly incensed that her son had not even reaped the pecuniary advantages consequent upon what she persisted in designating as his disgraceful alliance, visited upon *Monsieur* all the violence of her indignation; a demonstration rendered the less necessary by the fact that the prince himself had already bitterly regretted his weakness.

Thus were things situated when it was reported to the monarch that the Duke de Chartres had become the

father of a son,[1] whose mother was Mademoiselle Séry de la Boissière, one of the maids of honour of *Madame;* and his anger was so great, that he took an opportunity of reproaching *Monsieur* with a want of authority over his own child, which was, as he declared, entailing disgrace upon all the royal family of France.

The temper of the prince, already soured by his disappointment, placid as it generally was, gave way before this attack, and he demanded with a haughty asperity which startled the king, what he could expect from a young man of that age, who was weary of pacing the galleries of Versailles, and of wearing away the pavement of its courts; of being married against his will; and of remaining unprovided for, while he saw his brothers-in-law inundated with governments, establishments, and honours, without reason, policy, or precedent; alleging, moreover, that his son was placed in a worse position than the more youthful nobility of France, who were allowed to join the army, and upon whom military rank was conferred ungrudgingly.

Louis XIV, anxious to terminate this unexpected ebullition, endeavoured to turn the conversation once more upon the extreme libertinage of the duke; but *Monsieur* had now passed the Rubicon; and, for the first time in his life, was not to be awed into silence and submission by the frown of his august brother. He consequently retorted that idleness was the mother of all vice, and that no one could see with more regret than himself, the increasing imprudence and recklessness of the Duke de Chartres; but that he nevertheless witnessed them with-

[1] Known as the Chevalier d'Orleans, and subsequently grand-prior of France.

out surprise, and could not be guilty of the cruelty of reproaching him with faults and follies into which he had been precipitated by the mortifications entailed upon him by the king himself.

Conscious that he could advance no argument sufficiently feasible to controvert this assertion, and wearied by a conflict in which he felt aware that he was by far the weaker party, Louis XIV. was sufficiently master of himself to reply only by a fraternal smile; and embracing *Monsieur*, who lent himself very unwillingly to this sudden burst of tenderness, he assured him that he felt no displeasure at the heat with which he had expressed himself, as he was convinced that he had forgotten the prince in the parent; and that their interview should have no effect upon his affection.

Thenceforward, however, although the duke scrupulously observed all necessary etiquette, and even behaved towards the king in public as though no coolness existed between them, all the blandishments of his royal brother could not efface his resentment; but, nevertheless, perceiving that no consideration for his feelings would induce the monarch to forego his determination, and to allow the Duke de Chartres to serve in the approaching campaign, he was at length prevailed upon by his favourites to abate somewhat of his hostility, and to endeavour to compel his son to pursue his pleasures less openly.

Despite this precaution, however, when some days subsequently *Monsieur* proceeded from St. Cloud to Marly, in order to dine with the monarch, and entered his cabinet according to his habit at the close of the council, Louis XIV. once more reverted to the dissolute habits of the young prince, and

became so harsh in his accusations, that the duke, unable to endure further annoyance upon the subject, replied bitterly, that fathers whose lives had not been without reproach could possess little authority over the morals of their children. The blow told; and the king made an evasive answer, merely expatiating upon the patience of his daughter, and the necessity there existed of at least concealing from her eyes the results of her husband's folly; upon which a sarcastic smile passed over the features of the duke, as he remarked that His Majesty appeared to have forgotten the period when he had compelled the queen his wife, not only to associate with his mistresses, but even to be seen publicly with them in her carriage.

Driven beyond his patience by this direct attack, Louis XIV. burst into a fury of rage, which was met with equal violence by *Monsieur;* and the altercation became so vehement, that all the courtiers who were awaiting the appearance of the king, when he should pass to the dining-hall, in an adjoining saloon, separated from the royal cabinet merely by a screen of tapestry, were innocently rendered auditors of the whole of this stormy dialogue; which was only terminated by the appearance of an usher upon the threshold, to announce that His Majesty's dinner was served; upon which the king immediately left the cabinet, remarking to *Monsieur* that the forthcoming war would oblige him to make retrenchments, which he should commence on the property of those who had shown themselves careless of his pleasure.

He had scarcely entered the saloon when he was followed by *Monsieur*, who was in great a state of ex-

citement that it was generally remarked, should he neglect the precaution of losing blood, he would, inevitably, expose himself to severe illness. At table, the duke ate immensely, as was his usual habit, although he was evidently suffering, as was evinced by the extreme dilation of his eyes, and the heightened colour of his complexion. He, however, completed his repast without authorizing any remark or offer of assistance; and on rising from table, accompanied the Duchess de Chartres to St. Germain, where she paid a visit to the Queen of England; and afterwards returned with her to St. Cloud.

In the evening, *Monsieur*, still without uttering a complaint, joined the supper party, and again ate largely; but during the meal, as he was pouring out a glass of liqueur for the Duchess de Bouillon, it was remarked that he stammered, and made a gesture with his hand. As he was, occasionally, in the habit of expressing himself in Spanish, it was at first believed that he had done so on this occasion, and one of the guests requested him to repeat the phrase; but as the words escaped the speaker, the decanter dropped from the hand of the prince, and he fell into the arms of the Duke de Chartres, who was seated near him. The consternation was universal, for it was at once perceived that he had been stricken with apoplexy; and he was hastily conveyed to his chamber, where he was bled at intervals, and every means vainly employed to restore him to consciousness.

A courier was immediately despatched to Marly with the melancholy tidings; but the king, who habitually hastened to the bedside of his brother however slight

might be the indisposition from which he was suffering, contented himself, on this occasion, by commanding that his equipages might be in readiness should they be required, and by sending the Marquis de Gesvres to St. Cloud, to ascertain the real condition of the sufferer; after which he proceeded to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, where he remained for a quarter of an hour, and then retired to bed, persuading himself that this sudden assumption of illness was a subterfuge on the part of *Monsieur* to induce a reconciliation, for which his own visit might serve as the pretext.

Only an hour and a half had, however, elapsed, when a messenger arrived from the Duke de Chartres, with the intelligence that every remedy had proved unavailing, and that *Monsieur* was rapidly sinking. Upon this announcement the king left his bed, and as the carriages were still in waiting, departed without further delay for St. Cloud. The courtiers, who had followed the example of the monarch, and already retired to their beds, immediately rose in their turn, summoned their attendants, and in twenty minutes all the inmates of Marly were on the road to the palace of the dying prince; while the dauphin, who was accompanied by the Duchess de Bourgoyne, was so overcome by the recollection of his recent escape, and the anticipation of the scene of which he was about to become a witness, that it was with great difficulty he was supported to his carriage by an equerry.

At three o'clock in the morning, the king arrived at St. Cloud, but it was already too late. Not a symptom of consciousness had been detected in the sufferer since the first moment of the attack. The emotion of the

monarch was violent, and he had not been many instants in the chamber ere he was drowned in tears. Until within the last two months, no cloud had ever passed between himself and the affectionate and submissive brother, who had been the playmate of his infancy, and the friend of his manhood. The scene of the morning was also fresh in his memory, and its fearful results were now before him. *Monsieur* was, moreover, his junior by two years, and had, throughout his life, enjoyed health more robust than his own; and it is therefore probable that all the tears shed by Louis XIV. in that crowded sick-room, did not fall for his dying brother.

The king attended mass at St. Cloud, and at eight o'clock, the condition of *Monsieur* rendering all amendment hopeless, the Duchess de Bourgoyne and Madame de Maintenon suggested his return to Marly, whither they accompanied him in his carriage. As he was about to retire, and was condoling with M. de Chartres, the young duke exclaimed, mournfully: "Ah! Sire, what will now become of me? I am about to lose *Monsieur*, and I am aware that you do not love me."

The king, surprised and affected by this heartfelt appeal, embraced him tenderly, assured him that he might rely upon his affection, and then departed from the house of death.

When the monarch reached Marly, he proceeded to the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, still accompanied by the Duchess de Bourgoyne; and three hours afterwards, his physician, whom he had commanded to remain beside *Monsieur* so long as he should continue to breathe, appeared upon the threshold of the chamber.

"My brother is then dead!" exclaimed the king, as he recognised the intruder.

"He is, Sire;" was the reply: "no remedies would produce any effect."

As Louis XIV. was thus made aware that all was indeed over, he buried his face in his hands, and, for a time, again wept bitterly; but when he was urged by the duchess to take some refreshment in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and to spare himself the tedium and restraint of a public dinner, he resolutely refused to be guilty of so serious an infraction of etiquette, and declared his determination to dine as usual with the ladies of the court. To this resolution he adhered, but the repast was not prolonged; and at its termination he gave audience to the ministers, and the master of the ceremonies, with whom he arranged all the detail of the royal funeral; received a visit of condolence from the Queen of England; and, finally, made a tour of the gardens before he retired to rest.

The king had no sooner passed the gates of St. Cloud than the crowd which had thronged the apartments gradually dispersed, until at length the body of *Monsieur* was surrounded only by the menial servants of his household; who, some from affection, and others from interest, were his most sincere mourners. *Madame* was in her own apartment; but, as we have already stated, never having felt either affection or esteem for her dying husband, she was weeping over herself, and her own prospects; and exclaiming at intervals: "Not a convent! They must not speak to me of a convent! I will not be sent to a convent!" And it was no sooner ascertained that *Monsieur* had at length expired, than she got into

her carriage, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess de Chartres, and followed by all their attendants, and proceeded to Versailles.

On the following morning M. de Chartres was admitted to the bedside of the king, who had not yet risen, and who received him with great tenderness; desiring him thenceforth to look upon him as a father who would be careful of his interests, and forget all the subjects of annoyance which had arisen between them; which he trusted that he would also cease to remember, and replace by a mutual affection.

The young duke answered this address only with his tears and stifled ejaculations of gratitude.

After a scene of so much terror and affliction, and the emotion which Louis XIV. had evinced at the loss of his only brother, it was anticipated that the period which still remained to pass at Marly, would be one of gloom and melancholy; but to the astonishment of the ladies of the palace, who at mid-day entered the anteroom of Madame de Maintenon which adjoined her apartment, and where the king and the Duchess de Bourgoyne had borne her company for the last hour, they were greeted by the sound of his voice singing an air from one of the new operas; and a few moments afterwards they were summoned to enter, and assist in amusing the duchess, who was, as the monarch expressed it, overcome by some *unaccountable* fit of low spirits.

In fact, the poor young duchess, lost in terror at the remembrance of the first death-bed that she had ever witnessed, could not shake off the impression which it had made upon her mind, and was unable to exert herself, as she was accustomed to do, for the entertainment of

the king; who, having himself recovered from the fatal event of the preceding evening, was unable to understand that the sensibilities of another might be less flexible than his own. Nor was this all; for, on leaving the dinner-table at two o'clock, about six and twenty hours after the death of *Monsieur*, the Duke de Bourgoyne challenged the Duke de Montfort to a party at *brelan*, a game of chance then greatly in vogue at the French court. The astonishment of the courtier was excessive; and he ventured to reply by the remark that His Royal Highness must for a moment have forgotten that the remains of *Monsieur* were not yet cold.

"Pardon me;" answered the prince, "I am well aware of it; but the king will not consent to see any one dull at Marly, and has commanded me to form the tables, with an express order that I am to set the example."

All further objection was, of course, impossible. The *brelan* party was formed, and the saloons soon became a scene of universal play.

Such was the mourning of Louis XIV; while as regarded Madame de Maintenon, who had always disliked the deceased duke, and apprehended that he might eventually exercise an influence over the mind of the monarch, which could not fail to prejudice her own interests, she had so much difficulty in concealing her satisfaction at his demise, that she was delighted when the egotism of the king afforded her a legitimate opportunity of throwing off all outward semblance of sorrow, and of recurring to her usual mode of life.

The dauphin, who had amused himself by the antics of a learned pony while his own mother was on her way to the grave, could not reasonably be expected to feel deeply

for his uncle, although that uncle had perpetually entertained him with balls and ballets, and all the pleasures to which he was the most partial; and accordingly, on the day succeeding his death, having spent his morning in wolf-hunting, and on his arrival at Marly found the gaming-tables in full operation, he conformed to the fashion of the hour, and wound up the evening with cards. The Dukes de Bourgoyne and Berri, as they seldom saw *Monsieur*, save on state occasions, felt his death only as that of a relation of whom they knew little, and did not profess a grief which they were not called upon to experience; but such was far from being the case with the young duchess, whose sorrow was sincere, as from the period of her marriage *Monsieur* had treated her with the utmost tenderness and indulgence; but she was compelled to reserve her tears for the solitude of her chamber, prohibited as they were in the circle of the king.

The deepest mourner was, however, the Duke de Chartres. *Monsieur* had been to him a kind, a fond, and a forgiving father, from whom he had never experienced either severity or restraint; while he had also protected him from the displeasure of the monarch, to which he was now exposed. The latter source of regret was, however, silenced for a time by the magnificence with which the king fulfilled to the young prince the pledge that he had given over the dead body of his brother; for in addition to the personal pensions that he had previously possessed, Louis XIV. secured to him those also which had been enjoyed by *Monsieur;* a liberality by which, when the dowry and other claims of *Madame* were paid, the Duke de Chartres found himself

in possession of eighteen hundred thousand annual livres, including his appanage, besides the Palais Royal, St. Cloud, and his other residences. He was, moreover, allowed Swiss and body-guards, an arrangement hitherto without precedent, no princes of the blood having previously been so attended, save the sons and grandsons of sovereigns; his own guard-room in the interior of the palace of Versailles; a chancellor and an attorney-general, in whose joint names he could plead without appearing by his own; and the right of nomination to all the offices of his appanage, with the exception of the bishoprics. He, moreover, assumed the title of Duke d'Orleans; and retained, not only the regiments, both of cavalry and infantry, which had belonged to *Monsieur*, but also his own troops of gendarmes and light horsemen.

The king wore mourning for six months, and defrayed all the expences of the funeral, which took place with great magnificence.

By the death of *Monsieur* the court lost much of its attraction, for he alone had for the last few years relieved its monotony, by a succession of splendid amusements which had afforded a reflection of past times; and, despite his prejudice in favour of high rank and noble blood, his affability and courtesy had ensured him universal popularity. As a host he was unequalled, sacrificing both his time and his convenience to the gratification of those around him; while nothing afforded him so much pleasure as to see his court numerously and brilliantly attended. At St. Cloud, where all his household were accustomed to assemble, many ladies were admitted who were not to be met with elsewhere; but they were all of high rank, and addicted to high

play. The pleasures provided within the palace, and the extreme beauty of its situation, where carriages almost innumerable were provided for the accommodation of those who were too indolent to walk; the delicious concerts, and the splendid fare, rendered it an abode of luxury and comfort, without, however, detracting from its magnificence and grandeur; for the innate dignity of the prince commanded respect, even in his moments of familiarity.

Madame, meanwhile, had rather endured than assisted in these regal hospitalities; for, although she dined and supped with the court, and even occasionally drove out with some of her ladies, she frequently became sullen, and occasionally discourteous, uttering sarcasms which were the terror of the whole circle; and it was consequently a relief when she retired to her cabinet, in which she passed the remainder of her time gazing upon the family portraits with which she had lined the walls, and writing whole volumes of letters to her absent relatives, of which she afterwards made copies with her own hand.

On the 11th of June the court returned to Versailles, where the king had no sooner arrived, than he visited *Madame* and the Duke and Duchess de Chartres in their private apartments.

The widowed princess when apprised of this gracious intention, became, however, so much alarmed at the prospect of receiving him, that she requested the Duchess de Ventadour to see Madame de Maintenon, and to inquire what was the probable motive of His Majesty in according to her so great a favour, when she had reason to be aware that he believed himself aggrieved by her

conduct. The answer was by no means calculated to allay her fears, for it was reserved even to caution; and the duchess returned only with the information that Madame de Maintenon would pay a visit to *Madame* when the king had dined, and that she had moreover expressed her wish that the duchess herself should be present at the interview.

At the appointed time, accordingly, Madame de Maintenon was announced; when *Madame*, having caused all her ladies to retire save Madame de Ventadour, desired that a chair might be placed for her visitor, an attention which sufficed at once to convince the favourite, that the princess was conscious of her dependence on her good offices.

This courtesy was no sooner offered and accepted, than *Madame* opened the conversation by complaining of the indifference evinced by the monarch during a temporary indisposition from which she had suffered since the death of her husband, and Madame de Maintenon permitted her to expatiate upon her disappointment and mortification until the subject was exhausted; when she informed her, that she was authorized by His Majesty to assure Her Royal Highness that their common loss had effaced all that was past from his memory, provided her future deportment were more consonant to his wishes; not only as regarded himself, and all that had taken place on the subject of the Duke de Chartres, but also on other points, which had in reality induced the neglect of which she complained.

Madame, who save as regarded her son, and her want of respect for court etiquette, believed herself safe, vehemently insisted that she had not, upon any other

point, afforded the least pretext for a displeasure which had been so heavily and so conspicuously visited upon her, and became even indignant in her own justification; whereupon Madame de Maintenon drew a letter from her pocket, and inquired if she recognised the handwriting.

As the princess received it, she with difficulty retained her self-possession, for she instantly recognised it as one that she had addressed to her aunt the Duchess of Hanover, to whom she was in the constant habit of writing by every post; and in which, after having detailed the current news of the court, she had declared, that she could no longer determine whether Madame de Maintenon were the wife of the king, or only his mistress; and thence digressed to the state of the kingdom, both within and without; giving it as her decided opinion that it was at that moment reduced to a state of depression from which it could never hope to resuscitate. This unhappy and ill-judged epistle had been opened by the authorities of the post office, as was common at the time; but instead of furnishing an extract for the information of the monarch, and then being suffered to proceed to its destination, it had been detained, and submitted to his perusal in its original shape.

Madame had, accordingly, no sooner affected to read its contents, in order to obtain time to recover a portion of her composure, than she burst into tears; upon which Madame de Maintenon, in her most measured tones, passed the letter in review, expatiating upon the enormity of its several and separate contents, and the effect which they were calculated to produce in a foreign country. In vain did the unhappy princess assert that her words were merely the echo of what passed around

her, and that she had written jestingly, and without an idea of malice, the cold and impassible countenance of her auditor convinced her that she would depart with no such reply; and she was finally condemned to descend to apologies, to supplications, and to promises.

When a perfect understanding was established on the subject of the letter, Madame de Maintenon, who still pertinaciously retained her seat, informed the princess that she should esteem it a favour, if, now that she had executed the commission with which she had been entrusted by the king, she would permit her, before she took her leave, to trouble her upon a subject in which she was herself more particularly interested; and to inquire why, after the honour which Her Royal Highness had originally done her, of accepting her friendship, and even of volunteering her own in return, she had withdrawn entirely from her circle.

As this inquiry was made, *Madame* recovered her presence of mind; and hastened to reply that she congratulated herself upon the opportunity which it afforded to her of retorting upon Madame de Maintenon herself, the accusation of a change as causeless as it was uncourteous; for that while she had for a time exerted herself to maintain an intimacy which she would gladly have continued to the end of her life, she had been met only with coldness, neglect, and even an absence of that respect which was due to her rank.

This was the very admission which Madame de Maintenon had been anxious to educe from the lips of the haughty Bavarian; and it was, therefore, no sooner made, than she answered coldly and proudly, that Her Royal Highness did her no more than justice, for that she

was aware it had only depended upon herself to continue the intimacy which had once existed between them; but that circumstances which had come to her knowledge, had rendered all further professions of friendship towards Her Royal Highness inconsistent with her own sense of dignity and self-respect; and she had, in consequence, considered it necessary to withdraw from all such demonstrations.

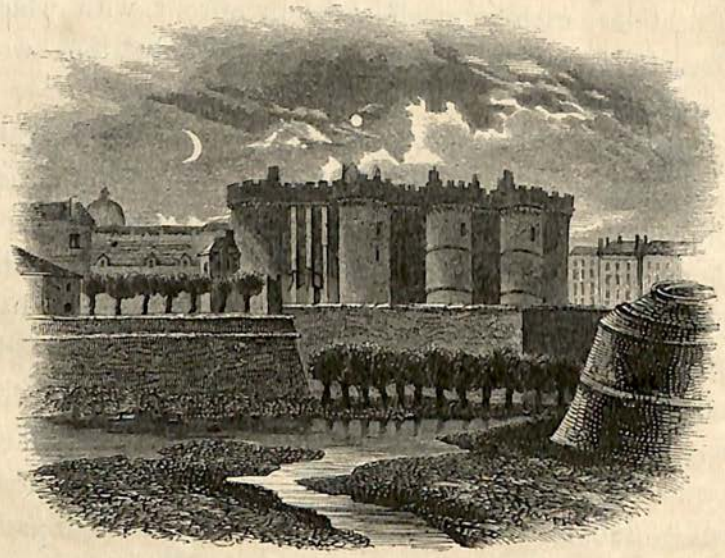
The princess impatiently demanded her reasons, affirming that she had a right to learn of what she was accused, and who were her accusers; nor was she destined long to remain in ignorance of either. Madame de Maintenon had listened unmoved to her disclaimers, and the defiance which she boldly threw out, declaring that no one would dare to assert that she had injured the marchioness in any way; and when they were at length brought to a close, she replied, with one of those cold and ambiguous smiles which were rapidly becoming the terror of Louis XIV, that she should not hesitate to satisfy the duchess upon both these points, although she had for ten years confined the secret to her own bosom; but that as the dauphiness had now been in her grave for that period, she considered herself at liberty to inform Her Royal Highness, that during the last hours of that lamented princess, who had done her the honour before her death to recognise the affectionate attachment which she bore to her person, and to accept her services during her final illness, she had learnt from her own lips the unsparing manner in which *Madame* had sported alike with her happiness and with her reputation. And then, in order to enforce upon the bewildered princess the extent of her information, she repeated with a steady

voice and blenched lips, a multitude of sarcasms and accusations, each in itself a deadly affront, with which Charlotte-Elizabeth of Bavaria was only too well acquainted.

This second blow was too much even for the haughty spirit of *Madame*, who saw all her future hopes of peace and consideration dependent on the mercy of a woman whom she both hated and despised, but to whom she found herself compelled to sue for pardon. She had consequently no alternative save to weep more bitterly than before: to exclaim against the treachery of the dauphiness, who had repeated conversations idly and thoughtlessly carried on, and understood to be purely confidential, and to be forgotten as soon as uttered; and then she took the hand of Madame de Maintenon, and pressed it between her own, which were humid with her tears.

After having for a time coldly triumphed in the abasement of her enemy, the visitor at length suffered herself to be appeased, as she had previously determined to do; and even consoled the terrified princess by promising in the king's name that the reconciliation which had now taken place should involve his own; and that he would never on any occasion mention either of the subjects under discussion to *Madame*, but entirely dismiss them from his memory: an assurance which, more than any other, tended in some degree to console the princess for the degradation to which she had been subjected.[1]

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.



CHAPTER XIV.

MARRIAGE OF PHILIP V.—THE YOUNG SOVEREIGNS—THE PRINCESS DES URSINS—THE CARDINAL D'ESTRÉES—COURT FLATTERIES—DEATH OF THE IRON MASK—PROGRESS OF THE PERSECUTIONS IN THE CEVENNES—THE MARSHAL DE VILLARS—JOHN CAVALIER—MEETING OF LOUIS XIV. AND THE CALVINIST LEADER—FLIGHT OF CAVALIER FROM FRANCE—DECLINE OF THE MILITARY GLORY OF THE FRENCH ARMIES—ACCUSATION AGAINST THE DUCHESS DE BOURGOYNE—HER POSITION AT COURT—HER ERRORS—DEATH OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—HER LAST HOPE—OCCUPATION OF HER CLOSING YEARS—FATE OF HER REMAINS.

On the 11th of September of the same year, an alliance was formed between the young King of Spain and Maria-Louisa of Savoy, the sister of the Duchess de Bourgoyne. This princess, although short in stature, was beautifully formed, with a fine complexion, and eyes of singular brilliancy. Full of talent and good sense, graceful, amiable, but withal possessed of considerable pride, she bore about her all the evidence of high birth and innate dignity, and eventually distinguished herself by a cou-

rage and firmness which were remarkable in her sex and at her early age; while they were, moreover, eminently advantageous to her husband, who, although by no means deficient either in sound judgment or powers of mind, was nevertheless the victim of an extreme indolence, augmented by the perpetual restraint to which he was subjected, and encouraged by the cold and reserved nature of his character.

The young sovereigns, alike strangers to each other and to the country which they were called upon to govern, were placed in a position of so much peril and difficulty that Louis XIV. considered it expedient to provide them with a prudent and intelligent friend, who might serve at once as their companion and adviser; and his selection ultimately fell upon the Princess des Ursins;[1] who, having passed a great portion of her life at foreign courts was familiar with the habits of that of Spain; and was, moreover, a woman of powerful talent and high breeding. Possessed of these advantages, which were no sooner made known to him by Madame de Maintenon than he fully appreciated their value, this princess had appeared to the monarch the most eligible person upon whom he could confer so important a charge as that of initiating a queen, yet in her girlhood, into the difficult art of maintaining her court with befitting dignity; while, although Madame des Ursins could not be considered by the Spaniards as a stranger, he still hoped that she would be sufficiently estranged from them as a nation,

[1] Anna Maria de la Tremouille de Noirmoutier, was the widow of Talleyrand, Prince de Chalais, and wife of the Duke de Bracciano, a grandee of Spain, and representative of the Ursins family.

not to involve herself in the intrigues and cabals of the court of Madrid.

During the widowhood of Madame Scarron, the princess had expressed considerable sympathy with her misfortunes, and interest in her fate, although she had never carried either so far as to prove an active friend; but she had no sooner ascertained that the Spanish appointment was to take place, than profiting by their former acquaintance, she had immediate recourse to the influence of Madame de Maintenon; who had, as she did not scruple then to express herself, "the goodness to speak of her to the king;" and it was doubtlessly through that very influence that this haughty, rich, and independent woman obtained, with the title of *Camerera Major*, the right to receive the dressing-gown of the King of Spain from his own hands, when he was about to get into bed; to present both his dressing-gown and slippers when he was preparing to rise; the pleasure of snatching her repasts whenever she could find a moment in which to do so; of rising at a particular hour, however greatly she might need rest; of fulfilling the most menial offices about the young queen; and finally, as she herself boasted, of emulating half a dozen hired attendants. "I feel sure," she wrote to her sister-in-law, "that the Piedmontese waiting-women of the queen will not wash her feet, or draw off her shoes and stockings, so expeditiously as I have done."

But the princess was resolved, at whatever cost of comfort or condescension, to acquire the confidence and regard of the royal pair; an attempt in which she perfectly succeeded.

Madame des Ursins was associated in her office of

friend and counsellor with the Cardinal d'Estrées,[1] who was instructed to maintain a perfect intelligence between the cabinets of Versailles and Madrid, and to reconcile their common interests. For this purpose Louis XIV. commanded his recal from Vienna, where he was at the moment on a diplomatic mission; believing him to be, as he declared, "the most able man in his dominions;" but the French king had forgotten that they were contemporaries, and that the cardinal, like himself, was beginning, both physically and morally, to experience the united effects of unceasing labour and increasing years; and this want of memory was the more excusable as the high breeding, the ready wit, and even the person of the courtly cardinal, were still the wonder of all who remembered how long they had been exposed to the cares of office, and the vicissitudes of climate.[2]

As a proof of this fact St. Simon relates of him that he had to the last preserved his teeth, which were extremely fine, almost in their original integrity, a circumstance the more fortunate as from his having an unusually large mouth they were more than commonly conspicuous; and

[1] Cæsar d'Estrées, Cardinal-Abbé of St. Germain-des-Prés, was born in 1628, and was the son of Francis Annibal d'Estrées, duke, peer, and marshal of France. He was raised to the bishopric of Laon in 1653. The king selected him as mediator between the pope's nuncio, and the partisans of the Bishops of Aleth, Beauvais, Pamiers, and Angers; in which office he secured a reconciliation, which for a time restored peace to the French church. Admitted to the conclave in 1674, he was sent to Bavaria in 1680 to arrange the marriage treaty of the dauphin; and after upholding at Rome the interests of France, he was ultimately appointed to follow Philip V. to Madrid, to assist him in his ministry. He returned to France in 1703, and died in 1714.

[2] Mémoires Politiques et Militaires, par Adrian Maurice, Duc de Noailles.

that, on one occasion when he was dining with Louis XIV, who was much attached to him, and always unbent in his society, upon the monarch complaining of the inconvenience to which he was subjected by his want of teeth. "Oh! Sire;" replied His Eminence, with one of his broadest smiles; "who on earth has teeth in the present day?"

It would appear, however, that the cardinals drew on flattery as smoothly as their scarlet stockings, and were not always scrupulous as to its quality or extent; for the same writer relates an anecdote of another Eminence, to whom Louis XIV. was, as a mark of especial favour, doing the honours of the gardens at Marly, when at a considerable distance from the palace they were overtaken by a slight shower, which induced the monarch to express his regret that his guest should be exposed to the rain in so light a dress. "Sire," was the courtly but vapid reply of the Cardinal de Polignac, "the rain of Marly cannot wet any one."

On the 19th of November, 1703, the curate of the church of St. Paul in Paris inscribed upon his register this brief record of a decease within his jurisdiction:

"This 19th of November, 1703, Marchialy, aged about forty-five years, died in the Bastille, and his body was interred in the cemetery of St. Paul, his parish, on the 20th of the said month, in the presence of M. Rosarges, major, and M. Reilhe, surgeon-major of the Bastille, whose signatures follow."

And this was all,—though a long, a fearful, and a mysterious history might have been appended to the registry; for this Marchialy, who died a prisoner, and was put into an obscure grave, unwept and unnoticed, was, as it is asserted, no other than the enigma which all

Europe has as yet endeavoured in vain to solve—the Man with the Iron Mask.

Meanwhile the war to which we have already alluded, and which was destined to secure to that Prince Eugène, whose pretensions had been the jest of Louis XIV. and his generals, an undying reputation, was convulsing all the European nations; but as it affords a prominent page in the world's history, we shall not pause to record its vicissitudes, but rather turn our attention to that intestine struggle which was still deluging the fairest provinces of France with misery and blood.

After the assassination of the Abbé de Chayla, the Calvinists, conscious that the reprisals of their enemies would be deadly, retired to the rocks and forests, where their numbers rapidly increased; and from these wild fastnesses they made occasional sallies into the adjacent country, carrying ruin in their path. A great proportion of the peasantry secretly favoured their cause, for their war-cry was "No taxes, and liberty of conscience," and the appeal came home to the heart of every man; while their hopes of ultimate success were sustained by the occasional aid which they received from both Holland, Savoy, and Geneva; the two former supplying them, whenever they were enabled to do so secretly, with arms, men, and money; and the latter with preachers or prophets of both sexes, by whose assumed inspirations they were guided in all their enterprises.

The suppression of this revolt, (for such was the name that it originally bore,) had been entrusted to the Marquis de Bâville, the intendant of Languedoc, who had only succeeded by his bigotry and oppression in swelling the revolt into a rebellion; while the second

general who was sent against them was the Marshal de Montrevel, who carried on the conflict rather like an executioner than a soldier. Under his auspices the wheel and the faggot did the work of the sword and the pike; and the excesses committed by his dragoons were so unparalleled, that the contest assumed the name of the *Dragonade;* while the rebels on their side, driven to exasperation, repaid every cruelty in kind.

The king, embarrassed by a foreign war, could not send against them a sufficient body of troops to overpower or disperse their numbers; and it was difficult to take them by surprise, distributed as they were among almost inaccessible rocks which they had been the first to climb, in caverns hitherto inhabited only by the wild denizens of the forest, and in the depths of tangled woods where no pathway could be distinguished, but from whence they emerged at intervals, armed to the teeth, and uttering yells of defiance. They had little, moreover, to apprehend from the treachery of the natives of the province; not only the peasantry affording them help and shelter, but the owners of many of the châteaux readily granting them refuge when they were pursued, and supplying them with food, with which they returned laden to their hiding-places; while even the cities of Nismes and other minor towns were detected in making sundry efforts to uphold their cause.

Once they met their enemies *en masse*, when the royal troops were so signally defeated that the result, happily for both Christendom and humanity, was the recal of M. de Montrevel, and the substitution of the Marshal de Villars.[1]

[1] Louis Hector, Marquis and subsequently Duke de Villars, was born in 1653, entered the army at an early age, and soon dis-

As the new general soon ascertained that it was as difficult to track the rebels as to vanquish them, he had no sooner made himself feared, than he proposed an amnesty, to which some among their leaders, weary of a life of perpetual hardship and bloodshed, at length consented.

Of these, the most remarkable was John Cavalier, who had been one of the principal chiefs of the Cévenols; and who consented, not only to lay down his own arms, but also to induce his followers to do the same, on condition that the marshal would guarantee to him the title of colonel, and the command of a regiment which he undertook to raise. To these terms M. de Villars readily consented; for at the period when the proposition was made, Cavalier was at the head of eight hundred men, and was the more formidable from the fact that he was

tinguished himself by his intrepidity. Appointed adjutant-general in 1690, he gained the victory of Friedlingen, where he was opposed to the Prince of Baden in 1702, and the following year that of Hochstet. Appointed marshal of France, he was entrusted with the pacification of Languedoc, and succeeded in his mission. Recalled to Germany, he arrested the progress of Marlborough, and beat the enemy at Stolhoffen (1707) after which he passed into Dauphiny, where he defeated the plans of Prince Eugène. In 1709 he returned to Flanders, where he fought the unfortunate battle of Malplaquet, in which he was both worsted and wounded; but he revenged his defeat by the victory of Denain, which, while it ensured the safety of the nation, also induced the treaty of peace in 1714, at Rastadt. Appointed president of the council of war, and admitted to the council of the regency after the death of Louis XIV, he became at one and the same time duke and peer, governor of Provence, a grandee of Spain, and a member of the French Academy. On the recurrence of the war in 1733, he took the command in Italy, with the title of general of the camps and armies of the king. He returned to France, and died in 1734; leaving behind him the *Memoirs* which bear his name.

especially protected by their most powerful prophetess, who had declared him to be appointed to the post which he then occupied by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit.

Barely three and twenty years of age, small in person, and with a physiognomy singularly gentle and attractive, Cavalier had rather the appearance of a priest than a soldier; but his extraordinary courage and intrepidity, the perseverance with which he overcame every difficulty, and the skill with which he conducted all his enterprises, rendered him the most dangerous enemy against whom the royal forces were called upon to contend.

When his proposal had been received by the marshal, and that Cavalier was summoned to present himself at Nismes, in order that the ratification of the amnesty might be finally arranged, his usual caution did not forsake him; for previously to placing himself in the power of the royalist general, he demanded hostages, which were unhesitatingly granted; and ultimately insisted that he should be attended during the interview by the same number of armed men as formed the guard of M. de Villars himself; this condition also was conceded; and thus escorted, and accompanied by a brother chief named Roland, the Cévenol leader signed the terms of the capitulation; during which ceremony the natural dignity and perfect good breeding of Cavalier excited the astonishment of the marshal, who had ascertained that, previously to the revolt, the quick-witted and courageous soldier before him, whose sole word had sufficed to control a numerous and undisciplined army, was merely an apprentice to a baker, obscure in birth as in station, and betraying no symptoms of the fiery and resolute spirit which he afterwards evinced.

As M. de Villars, upon the pacification of the Cevennes,

was re-appointed to the army in Flanders, he determined on his return to Versailles to present the new colonel himself to the ministers; and both he and his proselyte endeavoured to induce Roland, who had long been the friend and comrade of Cavalier, also to accept service under the king. The young chief, however, resolutely refused to abandon his party; declaring that he should never believe Cavalier himself to be sincere in his defalcation, until he saw him bend his steps towards Paris in company of the enemies of his province and of his faith; which he had no sooner done than he once more rallied the dispersed Calvinists—who, disheartened by the desertion of their most influential leader, had begun to disband themselves, and to attempt an escape across the frontier in separate bands—and renewed, although with less activity and success, the struggle which had been momentarily suspended.

As he proceeded towards the capital, the young Cévenol chief was met by strong demonstrations of respect and affection; and at Mâcon, during a temporary halt, he received an order from the controller-general to proceed at once to Versailles, where his welcome from the minister was so marked and courteous, that, at the termination of the interview, he felt secure of the realization of all his brightest visions for the future. Cavalier knew nothing of the court, nor of court diplomacy: he was in a new world; the wild child of the mountains was breathing the close and scented atmosphere of a ministerial apartment; and when the great personage to whom he had been admitted, informed him with a bland smile that he was at that moment the one topic of the courtly circle, promised him his own protection, and assured him that half the nobility, both male and female, were prepared to do the

same, no wonder that the heart of the young and ardent soldier beat high with pride and gratified ambition. But the climax of his triumph was yet to come—for before he left the cabinet of the minister it was confided to him that the king himself desired to see him; and that he must in consequence be in readiness for his presentation on the day after the morrow, when he would have a place assigned to him on the great staircase, near which His Majesty must pass.

Cavalier attired himself magnificently; his graceful figure, handsome face, and martial demeanour, had never before been so conspicuous; and his whole appearance, when he took up the station appropriated to him with a calm and dignified but modest self-possession, which silenced even those who had already begun to make merry on the subject of his origin, and then shook back the redundant masses of long fair hair which fell in glossy curls about his brow and shoulders, as he swept the circle with a keen and rapid glance, excited universal comment and admiration; but as no one was yet assured of the reception which awaited him from the king, and that none were anxious to compromise themselves by any premature demonstration, the young soldier was not greeted by a single courtesy; and stood leaning against the gilded balustrade of the staircase, with his legs crossed negligently, and waving the light plume of his hat to and fro, in complete and somewhat disdainful silence.

Suddenly a loud murmur of voices was heard; and as Cavalier turned to ascertain its cause, he found himself in the presence of the king. He had never before seen Louis XIV, and the blood instinctively mounted to his brow as he assumed a more respectful attitude.

When he reached the landing upon which Cavalier was stationed, the king paused, affecting to direct the attention of one of his ministers to a new ceiling which Lebrun had just completed, but actually that he might be enabled to contemplate at his ease the singular young man who had contended for so long a time against two marshals of France, and had finally made a treaty with a third; and when he had at length satisfied his curiosity, he inquired, as he indicated by a gesture that he spoke of the Cévenol chief, the name of this young noble whom he now saw for the first time.

On being informed by the minister, who made one step forward to present him, that it was Colonel John Cavalier; "Oh, true," was the contemptuous reply; "the baker's boy of Anduze;" and with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders, the monarch moved on.

On his side Cavalier had advanced a pace, believing that Louis XIV. would address him, when this insulting rejoinder fell upon his ear, and for an instant he stood as though he had been petrified to stone; but in the next he convulsively grasped the hilt of his sword; and, feeling that he was lost if he ventured to remain among the crowd who were watching his every motion, he sprang down the steps under the vestibule, rushed into the garden, which he traversed at a rapid pace, and returned to his hôtel, cursing the hour in which, confiding in the promises of the Marshal de Villars, he had abandoned his native mountains, amid which he had been as truly a monarch as Louis XIV. in the gilded galleries of Versailles.

In the course of the same evening he received an order to leave Paris, and to rejoin his regiment, which he im-

mediately obeyed; and at Mâcon he found himself once more among those of his companions who had resolved to share his fortunes, and who were, consequently, included in the treaty. To these, without making the mortifying confession of his reception by the king, he at once hinted that he had not only lost all faith in the redemption of the promises which he had received through M. de Villars, but that he even apprehended personal danger should he remain in France; and ended by suggesting that they should all gain the frontier without delay, and seek their fortunes in another country.

The word of Cavalier was a law to his adherents; and consequently these men, without murmur or discussion, forthwith commenced their march, alike ignorant and careless as to its termination.

At Dinan they performed their devotions; and then deserting in a body the inhospitable nation which had given them birth, they traversed Mont Belliard, threw themselves into Porentruy, and took the road to Lausanne.

Aware that all was at an end as regarded his faction in France, Cavalier first proceeded to Holland, and thence to England, where he was graciously received by the queen, and was appointed to the command of a regiment of foreign emigrants; at the head of which, at the battle of Almanza, he found himself opposed to a corps of French infantry; when the old enemies had no sooner recognised each other, than yelling out their hate, as if by one common impulse, they rushed forward, regardless alike of discipline and order, and a perfect butchery ensued; scarcely any survivors being left on either side. Cavalier was, however, one of the

few who escaped; and in recompense of the courage which he had displayed, he was raised to the rank of a general officer, and appointed governor of the Isle of Wight.

He survived until 1740 in his adopted country; and finally died in Chelsea Hospital, at the age of sixty years.

The military fame of Louis XIV. and his army had, in 1702, reached its culminating point; and thence-forward it began to decline. Three great defeats ruined the strength of the united kingdoms of France and Spain. That of Vigo, where a French fleet, which was escorting some Spanish galleons, was compelled to self-destruction by fire, in order to prevent its capture by the enemy in the year named; the defeat of Hochstet, where twenty-seven battalions of infantry, and four regiments of dragoons, were forced to surrender without striking a blow, in 1704; and, finally, the retreat of Ramillies, where, in 1706, the army lost all its camp-equipage and ammunition while hotly pursued, and was compelled to disband itself.

The French had been so unaccustomed to reverses under Louis XIV, that they could not induce themselves to believe that this successive ill fortune arose from ordinary causes, such as the exhaustion of their forces, or the error of their generals; but attributed it to treason; and it was ere long broadly asserted that information of all the measures decided at Versailles was sent from Meudon, where the dauphin held his court, to the Prince de Vaudemont, governor of Milan, who was devoted to the interests of the archduke; not indeed by the prince himself, but by some women of rank who were in his confidence. This report, however, gradually lost credit

as it was remembered that no rational motive could be assigned for so foul, so dangerous, and so unprofitable a treachery.[1]

The next suggestion was still more mischievous. The young Duchess de Bourgoyne had, it was said, witnessed the progress of the war in Piedmont with as much tranquillity as though she had been born a princess of France, but no sooner saw the army approach Turin, than she apprehended the total ruin of her father, and, anxious to spare him so bitter a mortification, exerted herself strenuously to effect the raising of the siege; in which attempt she secured the co-operation of Madame de Maintenon; who, seeing the rapidity with which age was gaining upon the king, and believing that she might, upon some future day, require the support of the duchess, lent her all the assistance in her power.

To this circumstance were accordingly attributed the restrictions under which the Duke d'Orleans assumed the command of the army in Italy; and the authority confided to the Marshal de Marsin,[2] without

[1] Louis XIV, sa Cour et le Regent.

[2] The Count de Marsin was the descendant of a noble family of Liége, who passed into France at the age of seventeen years; and having been appointed major of cavalry, served in Flanders in 1690, and was wounded at Fleurus. In 1693 he was present at the battle of Nerwinde, and at the taking of Charleroi; after which he joined the army in Italy. In 1701 he was sent to Spain as ambassador from the court of Louis XIV. to that of Philip V. In 1703, he was created marshal of France; and in 1704 he commanded the retreat at the battle of Hochstet. Ordered once more to Italy, he was so mortified at having caused the defeat before Turin in 1706, that he exposed himself imprudently during the engagement, and lost his life. He was the last male representative of his family.

whose sanction the prince was forbidden to undertake any movement of importance; as well as the abandonment of the siege of Turin, after a desperate engagement, in which Marsin was killed, and the Duke d'Orleans himself grievously wounded.

This accusation against the young duchess was based upon the assertion that the Duke of Savoy, menaced even in his capital, neglected every measure of defence; and that when he eventually became uneasy at the approach of the French troops to his very walls, and wrote to the Queen of England soliciting her assistance, he received from the Duke of Marlborough, in the name of his royal mistress, a reply to the effect that he need not be alarmed by the success of the French forces, as they had already flattered themselves wrongfully more than once on their advantages, and that, upon this occasion, they would do so again; while he, moreover, spoke so positively of their failure in the attack upon Turin, although it was undertaken by so strong an army, and under circumstances which appeared to render its capture inevitable, that it was impossible to read the letter without feeling convinced his assurance was based upon solid grounds.[1]

To those, however, who were not blinded by party-spirit or mortified vanity, these circumstances were considered capable of perfect refutation; nor was it probable that the Duchess de Bourgoyne would commit an act of treachery against the country of which she might in a short period become the queen, in favour of her father; who, by allying himself with its enemies, was weakening its resources, rendering the court at which she resided a scene of anxiety, and separating her from a husband to whom she was attached, and whose life

[1] Histoire du Règne de Louis XIV, par *Reboulet.*

was constantly endangered throughout the whole of the campaign. It is the less feasible, moreover, from the fact, that not even the indignation excited by the defalcation of the Duke of Savoy in the mind of Louis XIV, even for an instant influenced his feelings towards his beloved grand-daughter.

Admitting her freely into his confidence, he transacted business with his ministers in her presence, and had the delicacy never to allow any discussion on the subject of her father to reach her ears. In private he permitted her to hang upon his neck, or to seat herself upon his knee; to torment him with her unceasing playfulness; to open and read his letters in his presence; and to take an equal liberty with those of Madame de Maintenon. She was, in short, the joy and the light of his old age: the only being who had ever compelled him to forget the monarch in the parent, and to acknowledge to himself that he had the feelings and the affections common to his kind; while she became doubtlessly the more endeared to him by the fact, that even while she was conscious that her wishes were all-powerful, she exerted her influence only to serve those who required her aid; and that never, on any single occasion, did she utter a word which might tend to injure the humblest individual in his estimation; but affable to every one, courteous and considerate to those about her, and living with the ladies of her household in perfect harmony and friendship, she was at once the idol of the court, and the beloved of the people.

Unfortunately, amid this general homage, the duchess distinguished with more than common favour the Marquis de Nangis, a young and gallant soldier who had attached himself to the court of the Duke de Bourgoyne.

The prince, passionately devoted to his wife, was, as we have elsewhere stated, although possessed of moral qualities of a high order, by no means calculated personally to excite the attachment of such a nature as that of Adelaide of Savoy: while M. de Nangis, young, handsome, and graceful, at once captivated her fancy, and subjugated her reason so thoroughly, that ere long this unhappy passion was known to every one save her husband.

At the commencement of 1707, intelligence of the death of Madame de Montespan reached the court. Another link between the present and the past was broken. For the last few years she had placed her conscience under the direction of the Père de la Tour, the General of the Oratory, and had devoted herself entirely to her religious duties; while the first act of penance to which he compelled her was so bitter, that all those by which it was succeeded became comparatively easy. This penance was no less than to address a letter to her husband, couched in the most submissive terms; in which she offered to return to him if he would condescend to receive her, or to take up her residence at whatever place he should think proper to assign. The diplomacy of her confessor was most admirable, for when once the haughty spirit of his penitent had been bent to such a depth as this, he felt that his task would be light indeed.

It was long, however, ere Madame de Montespan could sufficiently conquer her pride and resentment to consent to such a humiliation, but the reverend father of the Oratory was no cowled courtier, ready to compromise with the conscience of his penitent; and he was at length obeyed.

Humbly, as the letter was dictated, did she write it; but the terror of her suspense was quickly terminated, for the marquis had no sooner received the self-abnegatory missive of his guilty wife, than he caused her to be informed that he would neither admit her into his house, prescribe any rule for her future conduct, nor suffer her name to be again mentioned in his presence; and in this resolution he sometime afterwards expired, without having ever overcome either his mortification at her desertion, or the passion which he had never ceased to feel for her.

The death of the marquis tended, however, to increase the difficulties of the confessor; for Madame de Montespan no sooner found herself a widow, than a new hope sprang up in her heart. Still beautiful, and convinced that the king had only been induced to discard her from conscientious motives, she could not contemplate the fact that she was at length free, and couple it with the recollection that she was the junior of Madame de Maintenon by five or six years, without believing that the weak health of her rival would soon liberate the monarch also, whose affections, excited anew by the tenderness of their children, might again be restored to her; although the single fact should have sufficed to prove the hollowness of such an anticipation, that Louis XIV. never, even in his most indulgent moments, spoke to them of their mother, or consulted her wishes upon any subject connected with their welfare.

Her principal hope lay in the influence of her daughters and the Count de Toulouse, whom she loved more tenderly than any of her other children, and who repaid her affection in kind. From the Duke du Maine she

anticipated no support, nor did she seek it; but in the respectful attachment of the young count she imagined that she saw the pledge of her success. This prince did not possess, like his brother, "the wit of the Mortemars," but he was the impersonation of honour, principle, and uprightness, with a deportment as affable as was consistent with a reserved and even cold expression. His rank as high-admiral of France had induced him to make a study of his profession, and to do honour to the confidence which had been placed in him by the king. He had already given repeated proofs both of his personal courage, and of his matured judgment; and although the monarch preferred the society of the Duke du Maine, he, nevertheless, did justice to the good sense, the truthfulness, and the other sterling qualities of the Count de Toulouse.

Thus the world had once more opposed its barrier between the penitent and her spiritual director, but it was after a time overthrown by the resolute firmness of the latter; and the unhappy woman, after this last struggle, perceiving that the constant presence of her children, whom it had long been her only happiness to overwhelm with presents and caresses, tended to maintain in her breast an ambition which she had pledged herself to abandon, at length resolved to permit their visits only at long intervals, and to confine her liberality to the poor; while not satisfied by bestowing upon them the riches which had become comparatively useless to her, she worked for several hours each day upon the coarsest and most ungainly materials, alike for the sick in the hospitals, and for the needy in their squalid homes. Her table, which had hitherto been splendid and profuse, was reduced

to mere frugal comfort; and she ultimately adopted the penances of which she had formerly made a disdainful jest; and not only wore haircloth next her skin, but also an iron girdle armed with points, which at every movement lacerated her body.

Morbidly alarmed at the bare idea of death, she was accustomed, during a thunder-storm, to seat an infant upon her knees, in order that she might find protection in its innocence; she also constantly slept with all her curtains thrown back, a number of tapers burning in her room, and several women to watch throughout the night; and when restless, she listened jealously to ascertain that they were either talking, gambling, or eating, in order to keep themselves awake.

Nevertheless, although subjecting herself to bodily suffering and to moral subjection, there was one darling weakness to which Madame de Montespan adhered to the last, and over which even the Père la de Tour himself had no power. The princely etiquette which she had established in her hôtel endured to the period of her death; and, by a strange caprice, the whole of the court submitted to the ostentatious and almost insolent regulations she had adopted, and visited her zealously; she meanwhile addressing all her guests, whatever might be their rank, like a queen receiving the homage of a circle, to whose respect and deference she had a claim.[1]

Always imagining herself to be in weak health, or making this idea a pretext for constant movement, Madame de Montespan was continually on the road from Paris to Bourbon-l'Archambault, thence to her estate at

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

Antin, and thence again to Fontevrault, of which magnificent house her sister was the abbess.

On quitting Paris for the last time for Bourbon, although, as she was even herself compelled to admit, in admirable health, she had a presentiment that she should never return; and before her departure, paid all her pensioners, who were principally impoverished members of the nobility, a sufficient sum to enable them to exist until they could secure some other means of subsistence, declaring that she should not live to supply their further wants. Her friends smiled at her prediction, but by a singular coincidence, she had only arrived at Bourbon a few days, when, during the night of the 26th of May, her women were alarmed by seeing her struggling against suffocation; and with considerable difficulty extorted her consent that they should summon her confessor, and her son the Marquis d'Antin. The priest was soon at her side; but even at that moment of peril the dying woman persisted, despite the discouraging comments of her physician, to maintain that she already felt better, and should ultimately recover. Amid these protestations, however, her strength was rapidly ebbing away, and before M. d'Antin arrived she had become insensible; but this was not the circumstance which engaged the attention of her visitor; for the door of his travelling chaise was no sooner opened, than he desired a weeping attendant, who presented herself to receive him, to bring his mother's casket to the carriage, as he should not alight. The woman only replied by sobbing out that her mistress was at that moment in the death-agony.

"That is not what I asked;" said the marquis coldly; "I inquired for her casket."

The femme-de-chambre disappeared, and a few minutes subsequently returned, carrying a small ebony box, clamped with silver.

"Where is the key?" inquired M. d'Antin.

"The marchioness never entrusts it to any one; she wears it about her neck."

"Shall I then be compelled to enter the house, and seek it myself?" he asked impatiently.

"I fear so, Monsieur; for no attendant of the marquise could be induced to perform such an office at such a moment."

Without further comment, the marquis sprang from the chaise, rapidly ascended the stairs, and entered the death-room, where his once beautiful mother lay gasping in the last struggle of dissolution. With a steady hand he drew back the costly lace which veiled her bosom, seized the small key that rested on it, opened the casket, thrust all its contents into the pockets of his *haut-de-chausses*, and regained his carriage, without the utterance of one word unconnected with the absolute purpose of his visit.

An hour afterwards Madame de Montespan expired; and it was ascertained that she had bequeathed her body to the tomb of her family, situated at Poitiers, her heart to the convent of La Flèche, and her entrails to the priory of St. Menoux, near Bourbon. When this arrangement became public, a courtier before whom it was related, exclaimed with affected surprise; "The entrails of Madame de Montespan! Did she really possess any?"[1]

A village surgeon performed the necessary duties, and

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

separated those portions of the remains which were destined to be conveyed elsewhere, from the body; after which the corpse remained a considerable time at the door of the house, while the canons of the holy chapel and the priests of the parish contended for a point of precedence. The heart, enclosed in a leaden case, was forwarded to La Flèche; and, finally, the intestines were deposited in a small trunk, and committed to the care of a peasant who was instructed to convey them to St. Menoux. But, as though the guilty and haughty woman, who had just looked her last upon that world which had throughout her life been the object of her adoration, was destined to convey a moral to her kind, even beyond the grave, it chanced that the porter, having seated himself midway of his journey to rest, and placed the box beside him, was suddenly seized with a desire to ascertain its contents; which he had no sooner done, than believing that he was merely the jest of some comrade who desired to make merry at his expence, he emptied the trunk into the ditch beside which he sat, and had scarcely done so when a lad who was herding swine, drove them towards him; and as they grovelled in the mire at the foot of the bank, they came upon the burthen with which he had been entrusted; and in a few instants, the most filthy animals in the creation had devoured a portion of the remains of one of the haughtiest women who ever trod the earth![1]

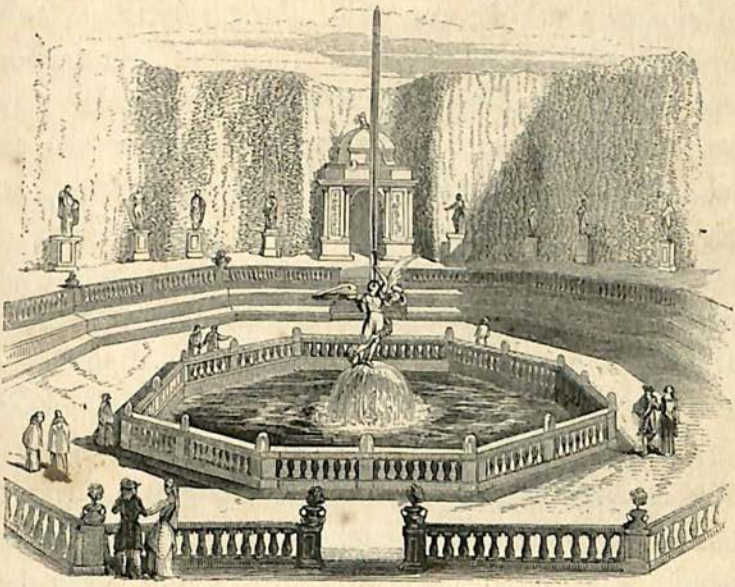
Thus perished at the age of sixty-six Madame de Montespan; who, after spending sixteen years in achieving an infamous celebrity, passed the succeeding twenty-two

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

in expiating at once her folly and her guilt; nor could anything exceed the indifference with which Paris and Versailles received the intelligence of her demise, save the disgraceful want of feeling which it betrayed in her children. The Marquis d'Antin alone assumed even the outward semblance of mourning: neither the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, the Duchess de Bourbon, nor *Madame*, evinced the slightest respect to the memory of their erring, but not the less affectionate mother; while, as regarded the king, to whom her will had once been a law, the news reached him as he was about to start on a shooting excursion; and the precaution with which it was communicated by the messenger, was at once rendered supererogatory by the manner in which it was received.

"Ah, indeed;" said Louis XIV; "so the marchioness is dead! I should have thought she would have lasted longer. Are you ready, M. de la Rochefoucauld? I have no doubt that after this last shower the scent will lie well for the dogs. Let us be off at once."

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.



CHAPTER XV.

ANTICIPATIONS OF THE DAUPHIN—THE FEMALE CABAL—PREJUDICES OF THE DAUPHIN—DEATH OF PÈRE LA CHAISE—THE NEW CONFESSOR, MICHEL LE TELLIER—HIS PORTRAIT—FAMINE OF 1709—ROYAL PLATE ONCE MORE SENT TO THE MINT—MILITARY REVERSES—EGOTISM OF LOUIS XIV.—THE DUKE DE FRONSAC—CHILDREN OF THE DUCHESS DE BOURGOYNE—DEATH OF THE DUKE DE BOURBON-CONDÉ—MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE DE BERRI—HIS PORTRAIT—CHARACTER OF HIS BRIDE—THE UNION AN UNHAPPY ONE—THE CHILDREN OF THE DUKE DU MAINE CREATED PRINCES OF THE BLOOD—AN UNPLEASANT INTERVIEW—MURMURS OF THE COURTIERS—VICTORY OF VILLA-VICIOSA—DEATH OF THE EMPEROR JOSEPH—PUBLIC JOY—ILLNESS AND DEATH OF THE DAUPHIN—A PRINCE AND HIS MISTRESS—DISPERSION OF THE MEUDON CABAL—THE DUKE DE BOURGOYNE DAUPHIN OF FRANCE—ISOLATION OF THE DUCHESS DE BOURBON.

DESPITE the attachment which the dauphin had always evinced towards Louis XIV, he had at this period attained his forty-eighth year, and was suspected of looking anxiously towards the throne which he was one day to inherit. The extreme jealousy with which the king had excluded him from all participation in public affairs, long after his age had rendered him eligible to assume the

position to which he was entitled by his birth, and the unconquerable timidity which rendered him almost powerless in his presence, had become alike irksome and mortifying; while there were several about him, who did not scruple to murmur openly at the long duration of a reign, whose glory had for many years grown dim.

That the prince listened at least complacently to these regrets is evident, from the fact that the Duchess de Bourgoyne, on one of her visits to Meudon, found him, in company with Mademoiselle Choin, the Ladies Lillebonne, and the Duchess de Chartres, seated before a table on which lay a folio volume of engravings, representing the details of a coronation, which they were examining with so much earnestness, that even her entrance did not cause them to abandon their occupation; and the heart of the young duchess swelled as she listened to the comments of the ladies by whom he was surrounded, and by which he was evidently both amused and gratified, as they identified him with the several ceremonies.

The imprudence of this proceeding was manifest and dangerous; and had the princess desired to revenge the slight and contumely to which both herself and her husband were exposed at the court of Meudon, they had placed an efficient weapon in her hands; for although possessed of talents and virtues of which a father might justly have been proud, the Duke de Bourgoyne experienced neither confidence nor affection from the dauphin, who had been taught by those about him to look with distrust and suspicion on a son, towards whom Louis XIV. had latterly evinced an affection too long withheld.

The prejudices which had been infused into the mind of MONSEIGNEUR, and the satisfaction which he derived from the mortification of his son, were, indeed, rendered painfully obvious during the Flemish campaign in 1708, where M. de Bourgoyne commanded the army, having as his lieutenant-general the Duke de Vendôme, one of the supporters of the cabal of Meudon; and where he experienced the greatest affronts to which a prince of the blood was ever exposed by a subject.

On the 20th of January, 1709, Père la Chaise expired at the age of eighty years, during thirty-two of which he had been the director of the royal conscience. Upon several occasions, even while both his health and his intellect continued unimpaired, he had requested permission of the king to resign so responsible an office, but his petition was rejected; and thus he was compelled to pursue his arduous task with the increasing anxiety attendant upon a consciousness that he should become each year less equal to perform it efficiently. Naturally mild and conciliating, as well as just and generous, he rarely overstepped the limits of his actual position; and even then, never, save in one fatal instance, in other than a rightful cause; while it is matter of historical record that in this solitary case he was compelled by the society of Jesuits, of which he was a member, and who exercised over him at once a watchful jealousy and a stringent control, to urge a measure against which his heart and his conscience alike revolted.

We allude, of course, to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; that awful atrocity which deluged the French provinces in blood, and cast an eternal stigma on the name and reign of Louis XIV.

Armed as he was by his moral authority over the

monarch, Père la Chaise betrayed neither avarice, ambition, nor revenge; and although firmly Jesuitical in principle, proved an inefficient instrument in the hands of the society, from his aversion to violence and aggression; while he was, moreover, so wanting in energy, that his indulgence was frequently inimical to the rigid performance of his religious functions. The king, on one occasion, related a reply made to him by the venerable ecclesiastic, which would amply suffice to prove this fact, were it not gratifying to believe that it was induced by the memorable persecution of the Calvinists.

"I reproached him one day;" said Louis XIV; "with being too supine; when he answered, 'It is not I who am supine, but you who are too harsh.'"

His charities were, moreover, unbounded; and his disinterestedness the proverb of the court. Party spirit has sought to injure him in the opinion of posterity, but its voice is now silenced, and justice is at length done to the memory of the good but weak old man. He was for a considerable period entrusted with the distribution of the church-livings, and displayed considerable judgment in his task; but at length the Jesuits, wearied of his gentleness and forbearance, by which their more ambitious aims were frustrated, intimated to him that it was time he should retire from office. Père la Chaise, thus supported in his own views, consequently preferred his request even more urgently than ever to the monarch; he pleaded his increasing years; his failing intellect; his physical prostration; and implored His Majesty to leave him time to prepare himself for another world, and to suffer him to lay down a responsibility to which he was no longer equal.

Louis XIV, was, however, resolute; and neither the

trembling limbs, the failing memory, nor the lethargic habits of the superannuated confessor, could induce him to supply his place; and thus, on the specified days and hours, he continued to shut himself up with this living corpse, and to regulate with him all the affairs of his conscience. At length, however, on the morrow of one of these periodical journeys to Versailles, Père la Chaise became so seriously indisposed that the sacraments were administered; and he had no sooner partaken of them than he requested that writing materials should be brought to his bedside, when, with much difficulty, he addressed a somewhat lengthy letter to the king, which was immediately answered by the monarch with his own hand; and thenceforward the octagenarian confessor devoted himself entirely to God.

Two brother Jesuits watched beside his pillow; the Père le Tellier, provincial of the order, and the Père Daniel, director of the seminary. During the intervals of prayer these officials put two questions to the dying man; the first of which was, whether he had fulfilled all the requirements of his conscience? and the second, if, during his last hours of influence over the king, he had secured the welfare and honour of the society? To their inquiries he answered that his conscience was at peace; and that it would soon be seen that he had done his duty to the brotherhood. After having given this double assurance to his companions, the exhausted old man was permitted to expire in peace; and a few hours subsequently he breathed his last.

At the *lever* of Louis XIV. two other Jesuits presented themselves, and delivered to the king the keys of his late confessor's cabinet, in which he had left a number of

papers, supposed to be confidential. They were courteously received; and in the presence of the assembled attendants the monarch moreover uttered an earnest panegyric on the virtues of the deceased ecclesiastic.

For several years Père la Chaise had strongly urged his royal penitent to select his successor from the society of Jesus, earnestly impressing upon him both the avowed and covert power to which its members had attained, and the danger to which he would inevitably expose himself by choosing his confessor from any other brotherhood; and this was a suggestion which was not likely to be disregarded. The king was anxious to enjoy the remnant of his existence in peace; and he accordingly despatched the Dukes de Chevreuse and de Beauvilliers to ascertain which individual of the society was, in every point of view, the most worthy of the honour he was about to confer; when their selection fell upon Père le Tellier.[1]

To Louis XIV. this Jesuit was personally unknown, nor had he even been aware of his existence, until, a short time previous to his death, when Père la Chaise had included his name in a list which he delivered to the king, and in which he had particularized the individuals whom he considered as the most eligible to succeed to the high office that must so soon become vacant.

Michel le Tellier was heart and soul a Jesuit, having passed through all the degrees of the society, and been in

[1] Michel le Tellier was a native of Vère in Normandy, was born in 1643, the son of a poor peasant; and in 1661 entered the Society of Jesuits. He pursued his studies in the college of Louis le Grand, and ultimately died in exile at La Flèche in 1719. He was a member of the French Academy.

turn professor, theologian, rector, provincial, and controversialist. Jealous of the honour and advancement of his own order, he was merciless towards every other religious sect; an able and zealous proselytist, he was unscrupulous as to the means by which he ensured his object; and self-centred and cold, he had no sympathy with his fellow-men, not even with those of his own confraternity, save as they advocated his principles, and facilitated his measures.

His intellect, at once concentrated, determined, and indefatigable, was incessantly applied to questions of importance; and he disdained, or rather could not comprehend, the cultivation of those more refined and elegant accomplishments by which it would have been at once relieved and embellished. A resolute enemy of amusement and relaxation of every description, he exacted from others the same perpetual labour to which he was himself devoted; and, gifted with a frame of iron, and a power of mental endurance almost unparalleled, would never admit the necessity of rest. In disposition he was deceitful, treacherous, and cunning; ever misleading those who confided in his sincerity, and then sneering at the dupes whom he had made.

Rapacious and exacting, his hand was extended only to receive; egotistical and avaricious, his heart was closed against every appeal; prompt to promise, and equally ready to falsify his pledge when it interfered with closer interests, he was unrelenting in his vengeance upon those who reproached him with his perfidy; ignorant of the most common courtesies of civilized society, and retaining all the original coarseness of his birth, he was nevertheless insolent and overbearing. In fine, he was a man to shun, and an enemy to deprecate; for his whole nature was absorbed

in the single idea of self-aggrandizement and personal revenge. At once hard and impetuous, his heart resembled a volcano, whose lava, when it has ceased to burn, turns into stone.

On the occasion of his first presentation, Louis XIV. saw himself approached by a man of repulsive exterior, with a gloomy physiognomy, a ferocious squint, and a dogged but still ill-assured demeanour. As soon as he was announced, and had advanced into the cabinet, the monarch inquired with a smile if he were a relative as well as a namesake of his former minister.

"I; Sire!" exclaimed the Jesuit, with a reverence so profound that it seemed as though he sought to humble himself to the very earth; "I a kinsman of the minister! I am, indeed, far from advancing such a claim, being merely the son of a poor peasant of Lower Normandy."

Such was the advent of Michel le Tellier at court, where his name was soon to become the watchword of terror and persecution.[1]

In the same year France was visited by a fearful famine. The olive-trees of the south proved barren, the fruit-trees remained leafless, and brought forth no produce, while the corn perished on the ground before the seed had formed. The storehouses throughout the kingdom being exhausted, an effort was made to import grain from the Levant, but the merchant ships were captured by the vessels of the enemy; and while the French army was daily perishing from hunger, the Dutch were vending to the hostile forces without increase of price, every description of provision.

Once more Louis XIV. sent his plate to the mint; but

[1] Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

he did so in direct opposition to the advice of the chancellor and the comptroller-general, who represented in vain, that while such a measure was inefficient to supply the wants of the people, it betrayed the extent of their distress to the enemy. Famine rendered the populace desperate; and, for the first time, Louis the Great was condemned to see himself placarded ignominiously, not only in the public thoroughfares, but even upon the pedestals of the statues which had been erected in his honour. The dauphin, whose popularity had never failed, dared no longer be seen in the streets of the capital, for his carriage was no sooner recognised than it was surrounded by famishing crowds, who cried aloud to him for bread, and he was unable to comply with their demands. In this extremity a new tax was proposed, which was named the *tax of the tenths*, from its involving a tenth of the revenue; a burthen so excessive, that it was for a considerable time resisted by the monarch, who felt that however it might be justified by the necessities of the crisis, the imposition was so heavy as to leave upon his mind considerable doubt as to his right to levy so extreme a contribution. This scruple was, however, removed by his confessor; and a week subsequently the edict was promulgated.

The conscience of the king was tranquillized by the recollection that his own sacrifice had produced the sum of four hundred thousand livres; that most of the principal nobles had followed his example; and that Madame de Maintenon no longer ate any but oaten bread; and under these circumstances he did not even hesitate to propose a peace with Holland.

Well, indeed, might Louis XIV. sigh for peace, when

he was compelled to witness the fearful exigencies which had been the result of his headlong and uncompromising ambition. He had lost, successively, the four great battles of Blenheim, Ramillies, Turin, and Malplaquet. By the first defeat he had been deprived not only of a formidable army, but also of all the country situated between the Danube and the Rhine; while the same engagement had cost the hereditary possessions of his ally the Prince of Bavaria; Ramillies had involved the loss of the whole of Flanders, and a retreat which had only been arrested at the gates of Lille; Turin had wrested from him the possession of Italy, with the exception of a few fortified towns, and even these were ready to be surrendered to the Emperor of Germany in consideration of his permitting a free passage to the fifteen thousand men by whom they were then garrisoned; and, finally, the battle of Malplaquet had driven back the French arms from the banks of the Sambre to Valenciennes.

Nothing could exceed the gloom which hung over the court. For the first time it did not pause upon the royal threshold, but made its scowl visible even in the sculptured galleries of Versailles, and in the gilded saloons of Marly; where, instead of the heaps of gold which had so lately cumbered the tables and changed owners on the fortune of a card, the great and the haughty were to be seen testing the oats, and barley, and pulse, which had been fashioned into bread, in order to decide which would suffice the best, if not to satisfy, at least to cheat, the hunger of an exhausted populace.

The only resource of the king in this time of trouble, he found in the affection and the fascinations of the

Duchess de Bourgoyne, whose power over his heart continued unabated. She was, however, long ere she recovered her spirits after the death of *Monsieur;* and she had scarcely done so, when, having imprudently bathed after eating a quantity of fruit, she became seriously indisposed; and as this illness occurred during the month of August, at which period the king was accustomed to visit Marly, and as his affection even for herself was not sufficiently disinterested to induce him either to defer his own removal, or to leave her to terminate her recovery at Versailles, she was compelled to bear him company; a fatigue which so greatly exasperated the worst symptoms of her disorder, that she was soon declared to be at the point of death; and this was no sooner the case than the monarch, Madame de Maintenon, and the Duke de Bourgoyne were in despair, believing that the prediction of the astrologer was about to be verified.

Youth and a happy constitution, however, ultimately triumphed; and she was no sooner declared convalescent, than Louis XIV, anxious to return to Versailles, was about to destroy all the new-born hopes to which this amendment had given birth, by once more dragging her from her bed to perform a second journey; nor was it without much difficulty that the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon, and the declaration of the physicians that this new exertion must inevitably prove fatal, prevailed with him to delay his departure for another week; at the termination of which interval the invalid was transported from her bed at Meudon, to that at Versailles, where she was compelled to remain a prisoner for a considerable period.

The convalescence of the duchess was still progressing

when a new courtier made his appearance in the royal circle, who at once attracted universal attention. Francis Armand, Duke de Fronsac, subsequently so famous under the reign of Louis XV. as the Duke de Richelieu, was then barely fifteen years of age, and had already become the husband of Mademoiselle de Noailles, in virtue of a compact made between their mutual parents three years before his birth. The resolute estrangement of the boy-duke from his enforced bride, combined with his extraordinary personal beauty and fearless disposition, at once made him the idol of the court, where he had no sooner arrived than he became passionately attached to the Duchess de Bourgoyne; who, on her side, received his homage with an imprudence, which soon rendered their mutual preference a matter of so much publicity that the king, indignant alike at the presumption of de Fronsac, and the levity of his grand-daughter, condemned the young duke to the Bastille, where, for fourteen months, he remained a close prisoner; little suspecting that he was then merely serving his apprenticeship to captivity, and that he was fated to find himself, on four different occasions, an inmate of the same royal and gloomy fortress.

Amid all these intrigues the duchess had meanwhile become the mother of two sons, one of whom was already dead, while the other was not long destined to survive; and who had each received at its birth the appellation of Duke de Bretagne.[1]

Three important events took place in the family of Louis XIV. during the year 1710. The death of the Duke de Bourbon-Condé, his son-in-law; the marriage

[1] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

of his grandson, the Duke de Berri; and the rank conceded to the offspring of the Duke du Maine.

M. de Bourbon survived his father, the prince Henri Jules de Condé, only eleven months; and thus passed his whole life in a state of mental and moral vassalage to a stern and capricious father. He was brave, passionate, generous, and satirical; sparing neither friend nor foe in his moments of anger, or in his intervals of bitterness; and at once a fond, a jealous, and an imperious husband. By his death a second of the daughters of the king became a widow.

After speaking of a prince who at once destroyed his own happiness and that of those about him, turn we to another, whose amiable qualities, estimable virtues, and winning disposition, secured to him the hearts of all around him, save, unfortunately, that over which he the most strenuously sought to obtain an empire. The Duke de Berri, the third son of the dauphin, was at once good-looking and graceful; fond of society and social pleasures, accessible and courteous; utterly devoid of personal vanity, but by no means deficient in dignity. Full of good sense and manliness, an accomplished listener, and of sound judgment, he was truthful, just, and pious, but without either asceticism or gloom. Possessed of considerable firmness, he could not endure restraint; a fact which induced apprehensions that, as he attained to manhood, he would not prove so amenable as might be desired in a younger branch of the royal family; and, in consequence, he received so many and such violent checks, that he became timid and embarrassed in all affairs of business. His governors and preceptors, while endeavouring to suppress his moral

energies, had laboured to fix his attention upon literature and science, but they only succeeded in disgusting him with both; and like the dauphin, of whom he was the favourite child, this disgust endured throughout his life. He also resembled his father in his dread of Louis XIV, and trembled when he addressed him on any subject more serious than a game of hazard, or the details of a hunt.

Two princesses aspired to his hand for their daughters; the Duchess de Bourbon and the Duchess d'Orleans. The first was high in the favour of the dauphin, and the second in that of Madame de Maintenon, with whom she cultivated a close friendship, and of whose influence she had the greatest need in order to secure the success of her hopes. Mademoiselle d'Orleans even at an early age was dissipated, vain of her personal charms, and initiated into all the vices of a court life. Slander had already been busy with her name; but she was no sooner made aware of the possibility which there existed of her one day becoming the wife of the Duke de Berri, than she conducted herself with so much art, and cast so impervious a veil over her natural propensities, that for two years previously to her marriage Madame de Maintenon heard constant encomiums upon her modesty and retiring habits.

Convinced that her fortune depended upon her deportment, Mademoiselle d'Orleans at Versailles was at once so graceful and so exemplary that no suspicion was entertained of her real disposition; and the constraint to which she thus voluntarily subjected herself was the less extraordinary, as at the age of twelve years, some time before she appeared at court, on discovering that

she was likely to increase in size, and thus to mar her beauty, she had resolutely condemned herself to abstinence and exercise, although naturally both sensual and indolent.[1]

The marriage proved unfortunate. The extreme affection of the prince, and the readiness with which he acceded to the caprices of his beautiful young wife, might have produced a happy effect upon a less faulty disposition, but could have no such result as regarded the new duchess; who, from the very day succeeding their union, revenged herself upon the restraint of the two last years, and showed herself in all her haughtiness and impropriety. For her husband she disdained even to affect attachment, openly ridiculing his intellect, and making a jest of what she termed his bigotry. Her egotism and irregularity were a constant misery to the duke, who, thralled as he was by her extreme loveliness, could not remain blind to her vices; while the Duchess de Bourgoyne, who had strenuously exerted herself to forward the marriage, and who had believed that it would prove a new source of happiness to herself, was compelled to feel that she had only raised up another and a formidable enemy, who, jealous of her influence over the king, and of the increasing favour of her husband, was covertly exerting every stratagem to separate the brothers; in which attempt she was, however, frustrated by their mutual affection.

While zealously employed in securing advantageous establishments to his daughters, Louis XIV. had, however, by no means been unmindful of the interests of his legitimated sons; and a feeling of compunction made him look

[1] Lettres de Madame de Caylus.

with different eyes upon the children who had been born to the throne, and those who could advance their claim only through himself. He regarded the first as the offspring of the nation, great in themselves, and requiring no extraneous privileges; while he looked upon the last as blameless but unfortunate beings, separated by law from the crown, and depending solely upon his own power.

Pride and affection alike urged their cause; and to withdraw them from their position of enforced inferiority, was a resolution which flattered his vanity as much as it gratified his heart. In 1694 Louis XIV. had given, both to the Duke du Maine and to the Count de Toulouse, the precedence over all the other peers; but this distinction was merely personal; and the children of the Duke du Maine were without tangible rank. The reflection was painful to him; and, accordingly, on the evening of the 15th of March, 1710, when he had risen from supper, and given the order of the day according to his usual habit, he walked with even more than his accustomed gravity to the outer cabinet, where he was followed by the court, and placing himself before his *fauteuil*, but still remaining unseated, he glanced slowly round the circle, and then, without addressing any particular individual, he declared that from that hour he gave to the children of the Duke du Maine the same rank and the same honours held by their father.

A deep silence followed this announcement; and before it ceased the monarch passed on into his private closet, desiring the dauphin and the Duke de Bourgoyne to follow. The princes obeyed; and then, for the first time in his life, the proud and absolute sovereign humbled himself before his son and his grandson, and entreated

them, when they should reign in their turn, to secure to the offspring of the Duke du Maine the privileges which he had just accorded to them, from affection for himself, and in consideration of his attachment for their parents; adding that he was then old, and that he asked this favour of them, out of the respect which they would bear to his memory.

The princes remained silent; and, at length, hopeless of receiving an answer, the king summoned to the conference the Duke du Maine, who was pacing the outer cabinet where no word had yet been spoken; and leaning heavily upon his shoulder in order to compel him to bend before the princes, he again reiterated his request; to which they replied only by a few inaudible words. The Duke du Maine, becoming alarmed lest they should resist the appeal, then voluntarily moved a step forward, and prepared to throw himself at their feet, when Louis XIV, with tears streaming from his eyes, implored the dauphin and his son to embrace the duke in his presence, as an earnest of their consent. The princes, more and more bewildered, merely however stammered a few more inarticulate and unmeaning words, and the king walked back to his chair.

All was still silent; and after the pause of a moment he again glanced round the assembly, observing that it would afford him pleasure that the court should offer their congratulations to the Duke du Maine, a command which was complied with on the instant; and while the discomfited courtiers were engaged in this ungenial duty, an order was given by the monarch to the grand master of the ceremonies to record the event in his register.

The crowd had, however, no sooner quitted the state apartments than a general murmur rose on all sides. The feelings of the dauphin and the Duke de Bourgoyne had been sufficiently visible throughout the whole ceremony, to assure the assistants that by them at least the common discontent would be appreciated; nor was it long ere the king, whose spies were dispersed throughout the palace, was informed of the universal clamour raised against the measure which he had just adopted; and, wounded and alarmed, he was on the point of retracting his given promise, when Madame de Maintenon, by whom he had been urged to this unpopular demonstration, called to her aid the Duke and Duchess du Maine, who, assisted by their partisans, surrounded the wavering monarch with flatteries and encomiums, expatiating on his power, his justice, and his generosity; and assuring him that the promptitude with which his wishes had been obeyed by the whole court sufficiently testified the ardour with which they had entered into his views; while the citizens were, on their side, unanimous in their applause.

Louis XIV. was old: in his most palmy days he had been gratified by the servility of those about him; and now, when he was bowed by years, and that his laurels had been rudely rent, he clung more tenaciously than ever to his power of compelling obedience. For a while he hesitated; but the blandishments of his daughter-in-law, the arguments of Madame de Maintenon, and the entreaties of the Duke du Maine proved irresistible, and the decision was not revoked.[1]

The famous victory of Villa Viciosa, gained by the Duke de Vendôme; together with the death of the Emperor

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

Joseph about this period, infused new life into the desponding kingdom of France. The league formerly formed against Louis XIV. had for its object, to prevent his possessing, at once, France, Spain, America, Lombardy, and the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily; and it was now immediately felt that the succession of Charles VI. to the crown of Austria, the empire of Germany, and the pretensions of his father to Spain and America, would, if ratified by the other powers, become as fatal an imprudence as that which they had previously laboured to prevent; and render the Emperor of Germany as powerful as they had dreaded to behold the King of France.

Paris was in a turmoil of delight; Versailles teemed with joy and gratulation. The glories of past years appeared to live again; but the old age of Louis XIV. was fated to expiate the errors of his youth. In April, 1711, the dauphin, when on his way to Meudon, encountered, at Chaville, a priest who was carrying the holy viaticum to a dying man. He immediately stopped his carriage, alighted, and with the Duchess de Bourgoyne, by whom he was accompanied, knelt until the priest had passed, when on inquiring of what malady the sufferer was dying, he was informed that it was small-pox. This disorder was the perpetual terror of the dauphin, who had been only slightly affected by it in his youth, and he shuddered at the reply, although at the moment he made no remark; but on the same evening, when conversing with his physician, he observed that he should be by no means surprised if, in a few days, he were attacked by the disease.

On the following day he rose at his usual hour, in

order to attend a wolf hunt; but while dressing he became faint, and fell back in his chair. His physician immediately compelled him to return to bed, and he had scarcely complied, ere he was seized with fever. An hour subsequently the king was informed of his indisposition, but he attached no importance to the circumstance, believing it to be merely one of those temporary ailments to which the prince was subject. The Duke and Duchess de Bourgoyne, however, although far from apprehending the extent of the danger, hurried to his bedside, and lavished upon him all the care and watchfulness which must, otherwise, have devolved upon his attendants; nor did they quit him for an instant, until they were compelled to attend the supper of the king, whom they assured of the gravity of the dauphin's attack.

On the ensuing morning, Louis XIV. was assured, on his awaking, that the life of the prince was in extreme peril; when he instantly declared that he should hasten to Meudon, and remain there, whatever might be the nature of the disease, until the recovery of his son; forbidding at the same time that any one should follow him who had not previously had the small-pox, particularly any member of the royal family.

The disease in due time declared itself, and the prince rallied so perceptibly that he was believed to be out of danger; an announcement which so thoroughly tranquillized the king that he presided at the council, and worked with his ministers as usual; paying two, and sometimes three visits a day to the invalid, and on every occasion approaching his bedside. As the convalescence progressed, the Dames de la Halle, the faithful adherents

of the dauphin, once more appeared to tender their congratulations; and the prince, grateful for this unswerving attachment, caused them once more to be admitted to his chamber; an indulgence which they repaid with such enthusiasm, that they rushed towards his bed, and kissed his feet through the coverlet; after which they retired again to sing a *Te Deum*, and to rejoice the capital with the intelligence of his recovery.

Thus did things progress until the 14th, when MONSEIGNEUR complained of increased suffering: his face became frightfully swelled, his fever augmented, and he fell into delirium. The Princess de Conti approached his bed, and spoke to him, but he did not recognise her.

At four in the afternoon he had sunk so perceptibly that his physician proposed additional advice; but Fagon, who was present, positively refused to admit any further aid, and peremptorily forbade that the monarch should be informed of this relapse until he had supped; and, accordingly, the king was actually at table while the august invalid continued to sink in so rapid a manner that all those about him were at once terrified and bewildered. Fagon, himself, alarmed at the responsibility which he had assumed, applied one remedy upon another, but all were without effect; while the curate of Meudon, who went every evening to the palace to ascertain the health of the prince, on reaching the staircase, finding the doors open, and the attendants absent, entered at once into the sick-chamber, and rushing towards the dying man, flung himself upon his knees, and began to talk to him of another world.

The dauphin was still conscious, but he had nearly lost the power of articulation. The priest, however,

wrung from him a few disjointed words, intended as a confession; dictated to him a few prayers, which the expiring dauphin attempted to follow, as he beat his breast feebly with his nerveless hand; and was repaid for his pious zeal by the gentle pressure of the sick man's fingers.

The king had just risen from table when Fagon met him with a look of terror, exclaiming that there was no longer any hope, for that the dauphin was then dying.

Louis XIV. staggered, and had nearly fallen; but rallying on the instant, he hurried towards the chamber of his son, and was about to enter, when the Princess de Conti thrust him back, exclaiming that he must henceforward think only of himself. The blow was too sudden; and the aged monarch fainted upon a sofa, which he afterwards refused to quit, demanding of every one who left the chamber, if his son were indeed beyond help. Madame de Maintenon endeavoured in vain to induce him to retire: he persisted in his determination to remain upon the spot until the dauphin was no longer in life.

The last agony endured throughout an hour; and for the whole of that period Louis XIV. sat near the door of the death-room, until at length Fagon announced that all was over; when he tottered towards his chamber, supported by Madame de Maintenon, the Duchess de Bourgoyne, and the Princess de Conti; and the king had no sooner left Meudon than all the courtiers who were in the palace hurried as usual to escape in their turn, taking possession of the first carriages which drew up, without waiting to ascertain the names of their owners. In half an hour Meudon was deserted.

The Feuillants,[1] who, according to the privilege of their order, claimed the right of praying beside the body of the prince, were not permitted to perform this sacred duty; and the remains of the dauphin were left, during forty-eight hours, in the chapel, perfectly deserted; until Dumont, the faithful attendant of MONSEIGNEUR, indignant at so indecent a disregard of the common usages of civilized society, summoned from their cloister six Capuchin monks of the convent of Meudon, who, in default of the privileged Feuillants, repeated the service for the dead, and performed the customary duties towards the body of the prince.

These preparatory rites were, however, very inefficiently concluded; for the corpse was deposited unembalmed in a plain coffin, standing upon tressels, which was not even covered by the royal pall sprinkled with *fleurs-de-lis*, habitually used for members of the royal family, but simply by that of the parish church of Meudon; while the funeral procession was equally undignified and squalid. The body was placed in a bright-coloured carriage, which being too short, permitted a portion of the coffin to appear beyond it;

[1] A religious fraternity which originated at Feuillans, a village near Rieux (Upper Garonne) in 1575, and was founded by John de la Barrière. The monks went barefooted and bare-headed, slept on planks, used only earthen vessels, and ate upon their knees; but a general chapter of the order held in 1595 ameliorated in some degree the severity of these rules. The order was divided into two congregations; that of France being known as Our Lady of the Feuillants, and that of Italy as the Reformed Brothers of St. Bernard. The costume was a white robe without a scapulary, a hood of the same colour, round in the front, and terminating in a point behind. The Feuillants possessed in France eighty communities and an hospital.

and not a single mourning coach followed to the grave the son of Louis XIV, and the heir to the throne of France.

The indignation of the populace as this strange procession made its way to the royal vaults of St. Denis, was loudly and fearlessly expressed; "Why did they not demand a subscription?" was asked by several in the crowd; "the citizens of Paris would gladly have contributed a million of livres to have saved the court so deep a degradation as this!" "Where," demanded others, "are the Dukes of Bourgoyne and Berri? Where are the sons of the dead prince?" but they asked in vain; those who followed the dauphin to his last resting-place were knit to him by no ties of blood.[1]

The hands of strangers stretched him in his tomb.

The king regretted in the dead prince a respectful son, whose docility and obedience had never failed; while the nation saw the hope which it had entertained from the known goodness of his character, frustrated for ever. To the courtiers, however, his death was a relief; for they had begun to feel their position difficult, between a monarch whose robust old age gave promise of a prolonged life, and a prince who in his fiftieth year had begun to weary of his dependence.

The actual blank left by his death was merely that occasioned by his high station, for as regarded his individuality he was almost *nul.* Obstinate beyond measure, his life had been a mere tissue of puerilities, to which he had attached all the importance that others would have reserved for great and striking events. Mild from indolence, rather than from temperament, he

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

was fearful of yielding to anger from the disagreeable effect which it invariably produced upon his system; while familiar to excess with his attendants, he entered into the most minute details of their several duties and expenditure, and questioned them in a manner which occasionally produced the most extraordinary impression.

Utterly insensible to the sorrows or sufferings of others, and reserved to a degree which closed his lips upon every subject save those in which he chanced to be immediately interested, he never, throughout the whole of their acquaintance, made a single communication even to Mademoiselle Choin on politics, or any other topic of public interest; and the only occasion upon which he ever evinced any anxiety as to her own fate in the event of his death, was when he departed for the army, and on taking leave placed a paper in her hand which he desired her to read. This was a will, in which he had bequeathed to her an income of a hundred thousand livres; but Mademoiselle Choin had no sooner cast her eyes over the document than she tore it into fragments; remarking that while he lived she could desire no such sacrifice; and that should she have the misfortune to survive him, a thousand annual crowns would suffice for her subsistence in a convent, which amount she had already inherited from her family.

At the death of the prince Mademoiselle Choin redeemed her word. She had never received from her royal lover (or husband) more than sixteen hundred louis each year, which he paid to her every quarter, placing the money in her hand on the appointed day, without the subtraction or addition of a livre. Nor was he less matter-of-fact at the period of his death; having

taken Mademoiselle Choin strictly at her word, and never once mentioned her name in any one of the multitudinous papers which he left behind him. The monarch was, however, more generous; for upon the demise of the dauphin he conferred upon her, unsolicited, a pension of ten thousand livres, when she immediately withdrew from the court, and establishing herself at Paris, lived to an advanced age in perfect retirement.

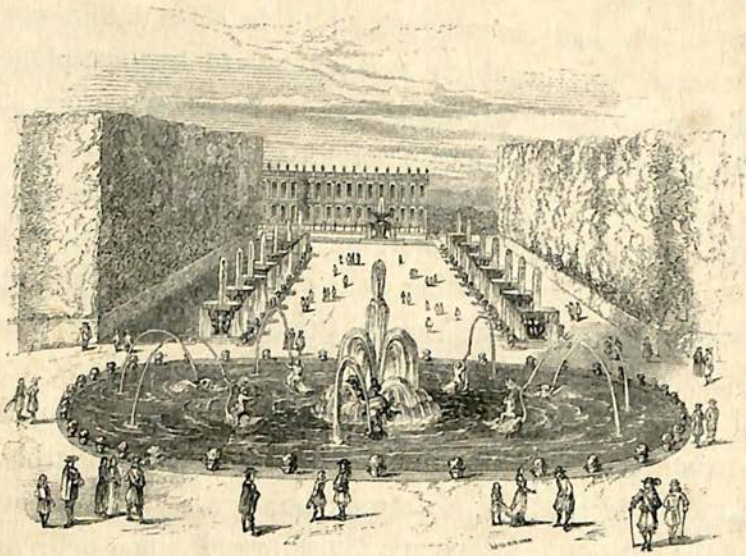
With the dauphin expired the cabal of Meudon, which had long been tottering to its fall. The Prince de Vaudemont,[1] who had been its chief support, had lost his favour in consequence of the defection of the Princes of Lorraine, who were his cousins, and whose conduct he was suspected to have sanctioned; and had consequently no hold upon the court save through his nieces, the Ladies Lillebonne; while even this was broken by the marriage of Elizabeth with Louis de Melun, Prince of Epinoi; who, once secure herself, cultivated the friendship of Madame de Maintenon, to whom she revealed the secrets of her party, in order to ensure her reception by the court; while her sister, who could not brook mere toleration where she had so long reigned through the favour of the dauphin, and was moreover conscious that she had, by her ill offices, irritated the Duchess de Bourgoyne, departed for Lorraine with her uncle, where she proposed to reside for a few months, until she had determined her future plans.

During that period, the small-pox having carried

[1] The Prince de Vaudemont was celebrated for his famous retreat before the Marshal de Villeroi, after the battle of Namur, when he was about to be attacked by an army of 24,000 men.

off several of the children of the Duchess de Lorraine, and among others a daughter of eight years of age, whom she had recently caused to be elected Abbess of Remiremont, the abbey was offered to the acceptance of Mademoiselle de Lillebonne, and she succeeded to the dignity with an income of forty thousand livres.

After this event the remainder of the circle dispersed. The two daughters of the king, who had been sincerely attached to the dauphin, were very differently affected by his loss. The Princess de Conti withdrew into comparative retirement, and found consolation in the society of a few chosen friends, by whom she was continually surrounded; while the grief of the Duchess de Bourbon-Condé, which was at first immoderate, was not lessened by the position in which she found herself when deprived of his support. Disliked by Madame de Maintenon, in open rupture not only with the Duchess de Bourgoyne, but also with the Duke du Maine, and with the Duchess d'Orleans her sister, she was moreover at law with her husband's family, destitute of one powerful friend, and the mother of a son barely eighteen years of age, two daughters approaching to womanhood, over whom she had already lost all control, and several children yet infants. In this position she found herself compelled to regret even her husband and her father-in-law, for whose loss she had never previously mourned; but as hers was a nature by no means adapted to despondency, she shortly shook off her grief; and plunging into a vortex of pleasure and dissipation, became once more the haughty and unprincipled woman of former days.



CHAPTER XVI.

INCREASING CONFIDENCE OF LOUIS XIV. IN THE DUKE DE BOURGOYNE—ITS EFFECT UPON HIS CHARACTER—HIS COURT—HIS MODE OF LIFE—HIS POLITICAL LIBERALITY—HEEDLESSNESS AND READY WIT OF THE DAUPHINESS—THE FATAL PRESENT—THE DAUPHINESS POISONED—HER DEATH—REGRETS OF THE NATION—SICKNESS AND DEATH OF THE DAUPHIN—DESPAIR OF LOUIS XIV.—THE DUKE DE BRETAGNE DECLARED DAUPHIN—HIS DEATH—THE TREBLE INTERMENT—THE DUCHESS DE VENTADOUR—NARROW ESCAPE OF THE DUKE D'ANJOU—DEATH OF THE DUKE DE BERRI—ACCUSATION AGAINST THE DUKE D'ORLEANS—POPULAR TUMULT—COURT FACTIONS—THE DUKE D'ORLEANS APPLIES TO BE PUT ON HIS TRIAL—IS REFUSED—MEDIATION OF M. DE PONTCHARTRAIN—DEPARTURE OF THE DUKE FROM PARIS—UNPOPULARITY OF LOUIS XIV.—PROFLIGACY OF THE DUCHESS DE BERRI—PRIVATE SORROWS OF THE KING.

Louis XIV, after the death of his son, became more unreserved with the Duke de Bourgoyne, who on the demise of his father assumed in his turn the title of dauphin. He forthwith began to confide to him the national diplomacy, and to invest him with an import-

ance to which he had never hitherto attained; and the result of this policy was immediately perceptible. The prince, who had until this period been timid, self-centred, constrained, and cold, became affable, accessible, and less disposed to render inconveniently conspicuous his extraordinary erudition; by which (perhaps involuntary) habit he had estranged the late dauphin—who, conscious of his own mental deficiency, could not brook the superiority of his son—and occasionally humbled the king, who was the more inclined to take offence upon the slightest pretext, that Madame de Maintenon spared no exertion to injure the duke in the estimation of the monarch, in order that he should not obtain credit in the event of his complaining of the levity of his wife.[1]

Hitherto M. de Bourgoyne had appeared, when in the court circle, like a man who felt that he was wasting time which might have been more worthily employed; shrinking before the mortifications to which he was exposed from the Meudon cabal; and spending entire days in his study, where he divided his hours between works of devotion and books of science. The surprise was consequently great and general when he was seen to unbend, and to show himself frequently in public; to do the honours of Marly with a face beaming in smiles; and gradually to substitute for the puerilities which had heretofore composed the conversation of the circle, subjects combining interest with amusement; which, from their very novelty, enchained the attention of the courtiers, who felt that they were obtaining information even while the time passed more speedily than it had ever previously done,

[1] Lettres de Madame Charlotte-Elizabeth de Bavière, Duchesse d'Orleans.

either at the gaming table or in the idle gossip of the court.

It is, however, by no means doubtful that, blended with this new faculty of enjoyment, the noble guests of Meudon found an added charm in the eloquence and intellect of their new idol, when they remembered that he was now the heir to the French throne; and contemplated the promise which he gave of filling it with a dignity and ability far superior to those which had been possessed by his father. Nothing could exceed the rapidity with which he won the admiration, the esteem, and the attachment of those with whom he came into contact, and the vehemence with which they disclaimed their former estimate of his character. The Duke de Beauvilliers was besieged with exclamations of wonder, but he admitted no change in the actual disposition of his pupil; such as he now appeared in public, as he declared, such he had always been in private; while it was merely circumstances which had developed his natural qualities, and not those qualities which had been the growth of circumstances.

Madame de Maintenon, enchanted by the popularity of the Duke de Bourgoyne, because it reflected upon the dauphiness, and delighted to see the grandson of the king give promise of a future fraught with honour, also abdicated all her ill-will; and by embracing his interests, and forwarding his views, materially augmented the tardy attachment of the king himself. She initiated the prince into the demeanour most agreeable to the jealous self-worship of Louis XIV; and taught him at once to adopt a more marked expression of respect and submission to his will than he had hitherto done, and to assume a more

courtier-like assiduity about his person; while these attentions, strengthened by the tenderness felt by the king for the young duchess, soon produced a marked alteration in his deportment to the dauphin. Louis XIV. had never ceased to enact the sovereign towards his son, but he became a father, and an indulgent one, to his grandson.

The dauphin was at this period nearly thirty years of age, and although his career was destined to be short, it was eminently useful to the nation, for he applied himself with vigour to the studies necessary to enable him to perform the duties to which he was apparently about to be called at no very distant period; while in order efficiently to master this new science he abandoned all minor pursuits, and spent his time between his religious exercises, which he somewhat abridged, and the public business, to which he paid a zealous and unwearied attention. The more he found himself agreeable and necessary to the monarch, the more submissive and self-abnegating he became: nor did he once betray a symptom of impatience to ascend the throne, upon whose step he already stood.

In his own immediate circle he showed himself anxious to be surrounded only by men of character and probity; rejected personal pomp as a mere accessory, wearisome in its action, and injurious to the interests of the people; and carried his respect for the public privileges so far as to declare that sovereigns were made for their people, and not the people for their sovereigns; a great but hitherto unacknowledged truth, which he boldly uttered unchidden in the very presence of Louis XIV. himself.

Nor was the dauphiness more constrained in the expression of her sentiments. She had now attained

her twenty-seventh year, and although the graces of her girlhood had vanished, she had retained the fascinations which were originally its greatest charm, and had superadded to these the more matured dignity of graceful womanhood. At once playful and strong-minded, the king appreciated her judgment while he was soothed by her tenderness; and not even her faults had been able to alienate for a moment the affection which he had vowed to her from their first meeting.

A ready wit, which repaired the imprudence of a thoughtless disposition, was conspicuous throughout her life; and was evinced on one occasion when the conversation had turned upon the policy of Anne of England. "Aunt;" she exclaimed heedlessly to Madame de Maintenon; "it must be confessed that in England the queens govern their kingdom more judiciously than the kings;" but immediately conscious of a mistake, perhaps more calculated than any other to wound and anger Louis XIV, she continued in the same breath; "Do you know why? Because it is generally women who are influential under a king, and men who influence the decisions of a queen."[1]

On the 3d of February, 1712, the Duke de Noailles presented to the dauphiness a box of Spanish snuff, with which she was delighted; and the rather perhaps that it was a habit in which she indulged unknown to the king, whose abhorrence of tobacco in every shape we have elsewhere noticed. After having profited by this present, the duchess placed the box upon a table in her study, where she could recur to it at pleasure, while no one had access to the apartment without her special permission. On the 5th she spent a considerable part of the day with

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

the monarch, in continual exertions to interest and amuse him; and at five o'clock retired to her apartments, where she several times had recourse to the forbidden luxury. Two hours subsequently she was attacked by shivering fits which menaced fever, and threw herself upon her bed, in order to recover sufficient strength to enable her to attend the supper of the king; but she soon found herself so much worse that she had neither energy nor courage to undertake such a fatigue.

On the following morning, however, after having suffered severely from fever throughout the night, she made an effort to rise, and although sick and stupified, still contrived to perform her usual duties; but after sunset had a relapse which deprived her of rest; and on the morrow she complained of a sharp and settled pain above one of her temples, which was so excruciating that when the visit of the king was announced to her, she sent to implore him not to enter her chamber. A few hours subsequently she became delirious, and continued so until the following day, the disease resisting every remedy, although she was copiously bled, and that opium was administered in large doses.

So sudden and extraordinary an indisposition deluged the court with dark and indignant rumours; and as at that period few sudden deaths had occurred which were not traced to other than natural causes, all the immediate attendants of the dauphiness began to question each other upon the several incidents which had preceded the attack; when it was suddenly remembered, that on the evening of the 5th, when the princess was compelled to retire to bed, she had expressed a desire to relieve her head by having recourse to the powerful snuff of the

Duke de Noailles, and directed one of her ladies of honour to bring the box. The Duchess de Lude had obeyed; but she sought throughout the closet in vain; the box had disappeared; another and another lady pursued the search, but with the same result; and ultimately the dauphiness, after expressing her disappointment, desired that no further notice should be taken of the circumstance, lest it should reach the ears of the king. Now, however, it flashed terrible conviction upon the minds of her attendants. The donor himself was above suspicion, for his ardent affection for the dauphiness was well known; but there no longer existed a doubt among those who were in the secret, that, by whomsoever introduced, the poison under whose effects their beloved dauphiness was now suffering had been conveyed in that fatal snuff. Still, however, they remained silent, lest by avowing the fact, they should excite the displeasure of the monarch against their mistress.

During the night of the 9th the princess fell into a stupor, despite the fever which still continued to increase in violence; and only partially recovered her consciousness at short and infrequent intervals. Certain appearances upon her skin for a time indicated an attack of measles, but this hope vanished within four and twenty hours; and on the following day her condition was considered to be so hopeless, that it was intimated to her that it would be desirable to summon her confessor. This advice agitated and alarmed the dauphiness, who had not apprehended danger, although she at once consented to the proposition; but as she deferred commanding his presence, he at length entered her chamber unbidden, and proceeded to prepare her for confes-

sion. As she heard his voice, she looked towards him, to signify that she understood his exhortation, but afterwards, to his great surprise, remained resolutely silent.

As it was evident that she was rapidly sinking, and equally apparent that from some inexplicable cause she felt unwilling to unburthen her conscience to himself, the anxious ecclesiastic suggested to her that this was no moment for ceremony, and that should his conjecture be a correct one, he implored her to name the individual whom she desired to see; when she immediately indicated M. Bailly, a priest of the Versailles mission. He was, however, absent; and the princess ultimately consented to receive a monk of the Order of St. Francis, named Noël, who was immediately summoned.

The repugnance evinced by Madame de Bourgoyne to confer her last confidence upon her own confessor, to whom she had ever appeared greatly attached, produced an unpleasant impression on the minds of those about her, and created unfavourable surmises as to the nature of the secrets which she had shrunk from divulging save to a stranger. Her wishes were, however, held sacred; and on the arrival of the new functionary, the dauphin, who had never quitted her bedside since the moment in which he ascertained her danger, left the room in a state of mental agony, which, superadded to the fatigue that he had undergone, had prostrated his strength.

The confession occupied a considerable time, and at its close the monk forthwith administered extreme unction to his penitent, which he had scarcely done when the Holy Viaticum was announced, and the king hastened to meet it at the foot of the great staircase. When she had communicated, the dauphiness requested

that the service for the dying might be read; but she was informed that her case was not yet altogether hopeless, and was advised to make an effort to sleep.

During this time a medical consultation had been held, and it was decided that the princess should be bled in the foot, and in the event of the failure of this remedy, that an emetic should be subsequently administered; the whole science of medicine under Louis XIV. being comprised in these two operations, which, on this occasion, however, utterly failed in producing any amendment; while on the succeeding day the disorder increased so rapidly that those around the invalid became thoroughly bewildered, and permitted every one who chose to enter her chamber, although the king was still seated near her bed. Towards the evening Louis XIV. was with difficulty prevailed upon to retire, and he had not reached the door of the palace when she expired. At the foot of the great staircase he was assisted into his carriage, drowned in tears, and so crushed by grief that he returned immediately to Marly with Madame de Maintenon, whose anguish was equal to his own; while neither the one nor the other had courage to see the dauphin before they left the house of death.

The decease of the young and amiable princess involved universal mourning, but none suffered so bitterly as her husband. Her apartment had been immediately above that of the dauphin, who, when banished from the dying bed of the sufferer by the express command of the king, had passed hours of agony, listening to every sound; but as those which were now to succeed would necessarily prove even more unendurable, he was at length prevailed upon to leave the palace; and at seven in the morning of the 13th he threw himself into his travelling carriage and

was conveyed to Marly, where he had scarcely strength to totter to his room. The king, who was immediately apprised of his arrival, hastened to weep with him over their mutual loss; but he had no sooner looked attentively into his countenance, than he was startled at the change that the last two days, during which they had not met, had produced in his whole appearance, for his eyes were dilated, and flamed with an unnatural brilliancy, while his face was covered with livid stains. Louis XIV, alarmed by these fatal symptoms, with which he had unfortunately become too familiar, instantly summoned his physicians, who declared the dauphin to be seriously indisposed, and advised him to lose no time in retiring to his bed. Their advice was followed; and once more the poor old king found himself surrounded by the terrors of another death-scene.

On the morrow the mysterious disease had made alarming progress, and the prince announced his conviction that he was not destined to survive many days; but this was so frightful an anticipation that his physicians refused to admit the possibility of such a result. On the 17th, however, his agony became so intense that he declared his entrails were on fire; and during the ensuing night sent to request that the king would permit him to receive the holy communion in his chamber. This was conceded; and at half-past seven he partook of the sacrament, which he survived only one hour.

When the fatal truth was conveyed to the aged and heart-stricken monarch, who sat on his velvet cushions in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, with his head bent down upon his breast, and his fingers tightly clasped over the hand of the Duke de Berri who was

seated at his feet, he flung his arms passionately about the neck of the young prince, exclaiming in an accent of anguish which sounded like the last cry of despair: "Alas, my son; you alone are now left to me!"

It was a terrible moment, and the heart of the monarch sank under the sense of his bereavement. He dared not look back upon the past, and he shuddered at the contemplation of the future. Death was about him on every side; smiting down the young and the great, and making his gilded palace at once a marvel and a mockery. None talked of consolation, for none knew whence it could come; and the gloom had fastened alike upon the hearts of all.

On the death of the Duke de Bourgoyne, the title of dauphin descended to his elder son, the Duke de Bretagne, but the name was destined to be unfortunate. This was the third son of the unhappy prince who had borne the same designation. Two were already in their graves; and only sixteen days after the decease of their father, the new dauphin and his infant brother, the Duke d'Anjou, sickened in their turn. The king felt that the hand of God was outstretched against his house; and on the first announcement of this new misfortune, commanded that they should both be baptized upon the instant.

The Duke de Bretagne had just attained his fifth year, and the Duke d'Anjou his second; and for a short time hopes were entertained that the attack might prove merely to be one of those transitory indispositions to which children are frequently subject. This error, however, was of brief duration, for on the second day, the Duke de Bretagne breathed his last; and the same funeral car conveyed to the vaults of St. Denis the father, the mother, and the child.

The Duke de Bretagne had no sooner expired than the Duchess de Ventadour[1] established herself at the bedside of his suffering brother; where, assisted by her women, she took the whole responsibility upon herself, resisted alike entreaties and menaces, and refused to allow the infant prince either to be bled, or to swallow any drug prescribed by the physicians. Fearing, moreover, that the rumours of poison which were daily gaining ground were only too well founded, she procured from a friend an antidote, which she had received from the Duke of Savoy, and by which her own life had been some time before preserved; and to this antidote, which she immediately administered to the Duke d'Anjou, his escape from death was universally attributed.[1]

This opinion was the more feasible as the cry of poison had become general; and the unfortunate dauphin had been so fully convinced of the nature of his malady, that it was ascertained he had sent while upon his bed of death, to entreat the monarch to be careful of his own life, and to avoid all contact with whatever did not reach him through sure and trustworthy hands. In this frightful conviction he had himself expired; and in this frightful conviction the sovereign of a great nation, already bowed beneath the infirmities of age, and the pressure of moral suffering, was destined to live on, powerless against the evil which was mowing down all he loved, and haunted by the apprehension that he might, in his turn, become its victim.

Nor was the outstretched hand of destruction yet

[1] Mademoiselle d'Houdincourt, subsequently Duchess de Ventadour, and lady of honour to *Madame*.

[2] Louis XIV, et son Siècle.

withdrawn. On the 4th of May, 1714, after an illness of four brief days, the Duke de Berri, to whom in his hour of bitter bereavement Louis XIV. had clung, as to the last prop of his declining age, expired under an exhibition of the same symptoms which had destroyed his brother. He had just attained his twenty-eighth year, and was the handsomest and the most amiable of the three sons of MONSEIGNEUR; but also the most ignorant, his preceptors never having succeeded in enabling him to do more than read and write; a fact which had the effect, when he had reached manhood, of rendering him so diffident that he never ventured to converse with any one save his most intimate friends, lest he should expose himself by the utterance of some absurdity.

Once more the fearful outcry which had already desolated France was heard; and this time its echo penetrated not only throughout the capital, but even into the provinces and foreign nations, which witnessed with terror and indignation the determined progress of a crime that threatened to leave the throne of France shorn of all natural support, and the last years of an aged monarch isolated and hopeless.

Of the existence of poison in this case, also, no doubt could indeed remain; and although the French people, guided to such a suspicion by some unacknowledged but powerful influence, still continued to fasten the crime upon the Duke d'Orleans, it is rendered probable by circumstances that in this instance it might have been justly traced to another hand. It is at least certain that a short period only before the death of the prince, he had been outraged by the insolence of his wife's chamberlain, to a degree which induced him to complain

with considerable bitterness to the Duke de St. Simon, his friend and confidant, of the indignities to which he was exposed through her irregularities, to which his eyes had been at length reluctantly opened. In reply, St. Simon declared that His Royal Highness was too forbearing, and would do well to complain to the king of the disgrace which the duchess was constantly entailing upon both herself and him; and this advice he followed up by placing in the hands of the dishonoured husband some letters of which he had become possessed, that had passed between Madame de Berri and her chamberlain, and among others, one in which she proposed to elope with him; together with his reply, wherein he declined to take a step that must inevitably ruin his fortunes.

The poor young duke had no sooner glanced over the correspondence with a burning brow and a flashing eye, than he declared his determination forthwith to submit these documents to Louis XIV, and to demand an immediate separation from his guilty wife; but as the king was at the time at Rambouillet, and private business delayed M. de Berri's departure for a few hours, the duchess was informed in the interval of the animated conversation which he had held with his confidant; a fact which she had no sooner ascertained, and combined with his recent departure for Rambouillet, than she instantly suspected the motive of his sudden visit to the monarch, and ordering her carriage without the delay of a moment, she followed him with such speed that she arrived only a few minutes after him. These had, however, sufficed to afford the prince time to display the damning proofs of her guilt, upon which he was already expatiating when Madame de Berri appeared.

"How is this, Sir?" asked the king as she approached: "you talk to me of an elopement, and the duchess is at Rambouillet!"

"What brings you here, Madam?" demanded the duke angrily.

"I come, Sir;" replied the beautiful delinquent, so soon as she had calmly performed her salutations to the monarch and Madame de Maintenon; "to reproach you for the discourtesy of not having desired me to accompany you in so agreeable a visit."

"You have lost all shame!" furiously exclaimed the outraged husband.

"Because I come alone?" asked the duchess, with an affectation of ingenuousness; "you know I am not timid."

"Well might you be so, Madam, nevertheless;" gasped out the prince, holding towards her the fatal letters which he still clutched in his trembling hand; "aware as you are that I here hold the proofs of your dishonour."

"You surely jest!" retorted the duchess with bitter irony; "or it may be that the memory of Your Royal Highness is deficient upon certain points. I believe that two years ago we entered into an arrangement to which I have remained faithful, while you violate it; and yet you are the person who complain."

"Must I then shut my eyes to your disgraceful intrigues?"

"I have been indulgent on this point to Your Royal Highness."

"No more of this;" interposed the king indignantly; "such recriminations are unbecoming to your rank, and in my presence."

"I only request of Your Majesty to shut up my wife forthwith in a convent;" cried the exasperated duke.

"And I merely beg to suggest to you, Sire, the expediency of consigning my husband on the instant to a lunatic asylum;" was the contemptuous retort of the duchess.

The words had, however, scarcely escaped her lips when she received a violent kick from the heavy travelling boot of the prince, which flung her into the arms of Madame de Maintenon; and she had no sooner recovered the shock than, without one word of leave-taking even to the monarch, with a heightened colour, and a haughty step, she regained her carriage, and returned with all speed to Versailles.

"I may have received no physical injury;" she remarked coldly, to one of the ladies of her household, who was endeavouring to find consolation for the insult in her bodily escape; "that is indeed possible; but the mark will remain *here*"—and she placed her hand upon her heart.

Meanwhile Louis XIV, outraged by the disrespect with which his presence had been forgotten or disregarded by his grandson, had, in the first impulse of his displeasure, raised his cane to strike him; but already alarmed at his own violence, and blushing at the unmanly action of which he had been guilty towards a woman, the Duke de Berri hastily withdrew.

Mutual error rendered mutual forgiveness, or at least its semblance, essential both to M. and Madame de Berri; and, accordingly, the duchess professed herself satisfied with the apology offered by His Royal Highness; while the king, glad to be so easily rid of an affair which

had originally threatened a more serious result, affected to forget his own share of the affront.

On the 4th of May, Louis XIV. held a wolf-hunt in the forest of Marly, and among those who followed the chase were the Duke and Duchess de Berri, both of whom were in high health and spirits. The run was a long one; and the prince, with whom this was a favourite sport, having ridden hard, had become ultimately heated, and was perishing with thirst when he encountered the duchess, of whom he inquired whether she or some person of her suite could give him a draught of liquid of any description. The duchess replied in the affirmative, and handed to him from the pocket of her carriage a small bottle in a red morocco case, in which, as she affirmed, she always carried a small quantity of exquisite ratafia in the event of over-fatigue. The prince seized it with avidity, drained it to the last drop, declared it to be excellent, and returned the empty bottle to the duchess.

"I am glad to have met you so opportunely;" said Madame de Berri with a smile; and so they parted.

A few hours subsequently the grandson of Louis XIV. had breathed his last.[1]

This extraordinary adventure, however, never became public, and suspicion still pointed towards the Duke d'Orleans; who, when he proceeded to the palace to sprinkle the body of the Duke de Berri with holy water, was subjected on his way to the bitter insults of an exasperated populace; and heard, as he passed along, the most atrocious accusations heaped upon his head without restraint or measure. Many pointed towards

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

him with outstretched fingers and dark threats, and the mob appeared to have difficulty in permitting him to pursue his journey without personal aggression. At the funeral these demonstrations were renewed with tenfold violence, and in lieu of accents of sorrow nothing was heard save menaces of vengeance; while so great was the public fury, that it was found necessary to take measures for his safety. In the neighbourhood of the Palais-Royal, before which the procession passed, the tumult became at length so menacing, that for some moments a deed of violence was apprehended, but the sensation ultimately exhaled itself in execrations and abuse; and meanwhile the indignation of the courtiers, although more restrained, was not less marked. Few among them sought even to conceal the horror which they felt towards the prince; and when he attempted to address them, turned away gloomily, inquiring one of the other, if so atrocious a crime were, indeed, destined to remain unpunished; or if justice would yet be done.

The same dark suspicion had gained even the king and Madame de Maintenon. In default of direct heirs, the Duke d'Orleans became the rightful sovereign of France; and this fact, combined with the knowledge that the unfortunate prince was addicted to chemistry, and had even erected a laboratory, where, assisted by his chemist Homberg, he amused himself in experiments at that period at once extraordinary and, in the public estimation, closely allied to magic, sufficed to fasten upon him the accusation of the foulest murders.

Louis XIV. was sinking under the weight of years: the poisoned chalice appeared for ever at his own lips: he was oppressed by the fearful mystery which enveloped

him; and any light, however horrible, thrown upon the fatal occurrences of the last few years, seemed to his shrinking spirit preferable to the darkness by which he had been hitherto surrounded. He had supported the death of the Duke de Berri with a firmness which astonished all about him, and had commanded that the body of his grandson should not be opened, for he shuddered at a renewal of the horrors through which he had already passed; and the funeral was no sooner performed than he terminated the mourning at Versailles.

The court was at this juncture divided into two distinct parties. The one was composed of the princes of the blood, who were represented by the houses of Orleans, Condé, and Conti, and all those scions of pure and ancient race, who gloried in their ability to display above the portals of their palaces, and on the panels of their equipages, a shield unsullied by the bar of bastardy; and to these were attached the dukes and peers whose interests were involved in the same cause: while the opposite faction was that of the legitimated princes; and consisted of the Duke du Mainè, the Count de Toulouse, and the other natural children of the king; strengthened, moreover, by the influence of Madame de Maintenon, to whom they had extended a hope that she should yet become the recognised and acknowledged queen of France. The first party based their claims upon their legal rights; and the second upon their acquired privileges.

The latter struck the first blow, and it was a heavy one. The Duke d'Orleans became branded as an assassin.

The principal motive of this heartless and miserable calumny was to deprive the prince of his right of regency

during the minority of the Duke d'Anjou, which must, should the plot prove successful, necessarily revert to the Duke du Maine; and le Tellier, the confessor of Louis XIV, conscious of the undisguised hatred of the prince towards the Jesuits, of whose order he was one of the most zealous representatives, lent himself without hesitation to the faction of the bastards; and thus, while the populace vented their invectives in the public streets against the Duke d'Orleans, le Tellier laboured less audibly, but even more effectively in the confessional; repeating without compunction to his august penitent, that the death of every prince of the royal house advanced his nephew one step nearer to the throne; expatiating upon his hidden studies as a work of destruction rather than of improvement; and compelling the harassed and bewildered monarch to lend a quailing ear to the outcry of a bribed rabble, who, on seeing the prince leave the palace, yelled out their execrations within the very hearing of their sovereign.

The Duke d'Orleans was meanwhile a prey to the most violent mental anguish. The Marquis de Canillac, one of his fastest friends, made his way on one occasion through the excited mob, and entered his apartment, where he found him extended upon the floor in a state of the most gloomy despair, from which his remonstrances were, for a considerable time, unable to arouse him; but once awakened from his stupor of agony, he declared his resolution to justify himself to the king.

His entrance was not forbidden, though the reception which he met was stern and cold; but the prince had already suffered too much to be discouraged by a bent brow, and he hastened to inform the monarch that he

came as a suppliant, to entreat that he might be arrested and conveyed to the Bastille, to be forthwith put upon his trial. A smile of disdainful distrust settled upon the lip of Louis XIV. as he replied, that he would not suffer so foul a subject to be made the cause of further scandal to the public; and that the duke would do so at his peril: adding that if he presented himself at the fortress, he should allow him to remain there.

The prince then suggested that at least his chemist Homberg should be imprisoned, in order that by the evidence adduced upon his trial he might himself be justified; but the king, perplexed, uncertain, and irritated between the conflicting interests which he was called upon to judge, turned his back upon him before he had concluded his appeal, and left the apartment.

On his return to Paris the duke ascertained that Homberg had surrendered himself, and was already a prisoner in the Bastille; and he had scarcely informed his family of the reception which he had experienced from the king, when he received a message from the chancellor Pontchartrain, entreating him not to risk another personal appeal to the sovereign, and pledging himself that he would immediately see the monarch in his behalf, and represent the disastrous consequences which must inevitably accrue to the state from a trial involving the life of a prince of the blood royal. The Duke d'Orleans, by the advice of his friends, accepted this mediation; and accompanied by all the princes and princesses of his party, departed for St. Cloud, there to await the result of the king's interview with M. de Pontchartrain.

The almost royal procession of the princes as they left the city, was so numerous, so noble, and so magnificent,

that for once the duke passed on unimpeded; and he had not long established himself at St. Cloud ere he received the welcome intelligence that, after a long audience, in which the king had fully recognised his innocence, the minister had received an order to liberate Homberg from his captivity.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. never overcame his distrust of his brother's son; and although in private he passed hours in his chair, with clasped hands and bent head, evidently absorbed by the most bitter reflections, he still possessed sufficient self-control to devour his grief in public, and continued as accessible as before. All these domestic miseries had fallen upon him at the close of a long and disastrous war, and at a time when his kingdom was the prey of famine: but still he strove to carry his head erect before his subjects, and to enact the monarch to the last, however wretched might be his solitary moments. And they were wretched: for he could not conceal from himself that at the very period in which he most needed support and consolation, the affection of his people had become alienated by the disorder of the public finances, to which he could apply no remedy; while his unbounded confidence in Père le Tellier, by whom it was abused, added to their discontent.

They had forgiven the errors of his manhood, but they could not pardon the weakness of his old age.

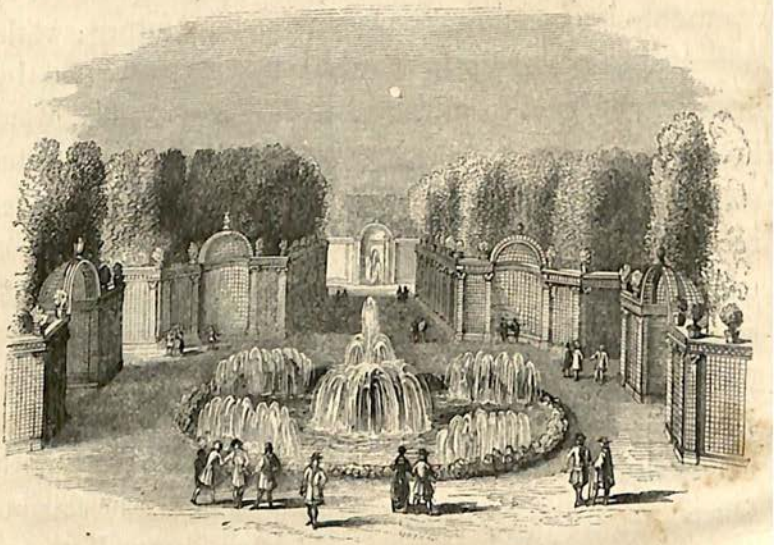
Meanwhile, the Duke du Maine exerted, in the name of the king, and through the influence of Madame de Maintenon, all the privileges of royalty; and had no longer a wish ungratified, save that the regency should be wrested from the Duke d'Orleans, and devolve upon himself.

It was far otherwise, however, with the monarch, whose cup of bitterness was not yet full. The Duchess de Berri, now a widow, was the only legitimate princess who remained of an age to preside over his court, and her conduct from the first period of her marriage had been, as we have already stated, of the most revolting description. Fascinating in her conversation, but perfidious from a mere love of falsehood, she possessed no one virtue to redeem her many and unblushing vices. The pride which caused her upon every opportunity to insult her mother with the stain upon her birth, by which she was disabled from competing with herself: and her arrogance in assuming precedence of her upon every state occasion; her contempt for her husband, whose mental deficiencies were daily the subject of her sarcasms; and the pertinacity with which she opposed his will, whenever he ventured to express it, were, unfortunately, only her minor defects; and thus the stately court of Anne of Austria, the punctilious circle of Maria Theresa, and the elegant society of the Duchess de Bourgoyne, were, at the very period of his life when Louis XIV, at length disenchanted of the greatness, and disgusted with the vices of this world, was seeking to purify his heart and to exalt his thoughts that they might become more meet for heaven, superseded by the orgies of a wanton, who, with unabashed brow, and unshrinking eye, carried her intrigues even into the very saloon of Marly.

The blood of Madame de Montespan had not belied itself.

Turn whithersoever he would, therefore, the unfortunate monarch was surrounded by mortification, gloom, and disappointment; and even his most intimate circle, his

most cherished retirement, was invaded by remorse and regret. He could not look forward, for even Louis XIV, at seventy-two, could not speculate upon a future; while the most glorious portions of the past were tainted by error, injustice, and ambition; and these vanished, what had remained? He could not reflect upon the sinister events of his reign, particularly of those which were yet recent, without becoming the victim of the most fearful and harassing suspicions. Richard in his war-tent never contemplated a train of more appalling shadows than those evoked by the memory of Louis XIV, as he sat, supported by cushions, and pillowed upon velvet, in his sumptuous apartment. Henrietta of England, the Queen of Spain her daughter, the Dauphin, the fair and fond Duchess de Bourgoyne and her child, and last of all the Duke de Berri, the sole prop left to that throne which must soon be empty, save a frail infant; such were the shapes that haunted his last reveries; and well might the pale old man in his solitary moments bend down the proud head which had no longer strength to bear a crown, and eschewing the arrogance of those years in which he had assumed the bearing of a demi-god, confess to his own heart that he was human.



CHAPTER XVII.

MORAL LASSITUDE OF LOUIS XIV. — INDECISION ON THE QUESTION OF THE REGENCY —PERSECUTIONS OF HIS PRIVATE CIRCLE — THE DUCHESS DU MAINE AND HER CHILDREN—THEY ARE DECLARED ELIGIBLE TO SUCCEED TO THE CROWN—RETIREMENT OF M. DE PONTCHARTRAIN—HE IS SUCCEEDED BY M. VOISIN—PARTY ARGUMENTS—COUNCIL OF REGENCY—THE WILL CONCEALED—REMORSE OF LOUIS XIV.—RECEPTION OF THE PERSIAN AMBASSADOR—ILLNESS OF THE KING—PREMATURE DESPATCHES—REVIEW OF THE HOUSEHOLD TROOPS—ANXIETY OF THE KING TO CONCEAL HIS DECAY—ANXIETY OF THE DUCHESS DU MAINE—A MARRIAGE REFUSED—A TARDY CONFIDENCE—LAST HOURS OF LOUIS XIV.—WAS LOUIS XIV. A JESUIT?—INDIFFERENCE OF THE NATION TO HIS DEATH—A PARTING SCENE—LOUIS XIV. AND HIS SUCCESSOR—MADAME DE MAINTENON AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE BODY-GUARD—HER DEPARTURE FOR ST. CYR—THE LAST AGONY—DEATH OF LOUIS XIV.—"THE KING IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE KING!"

In such a state of moral lassitude as that by which Louis XIV. was now oppressed, he was little able to contend against the intrigues of an uncompromising faction; and thus, although not blind to the interested views of those by whom he was persecuted to effect a measure

repugnant alike to his principles and to his feelings, he gradually suffered himself to be persuaded, even if he could not be convinced, by the specious sophistry of their arguments. It is true that he had declared himself convinced of the innocence of the Duke d'Orleans of the foul charges which had been made against him, but the mystery was yet unsolved—that innocence was but presumptive; while, on the other hand, the immoral habits, atheistical principles, and reckless disposition of the prince, were ill suited to the responsible position to which his birth had called him.

The Duke d'Anjou was yet an infant; it was an existence as yet unformed, a heart and a mind yet to be shaped and fashioned; and above all it was a life to be preserved; a king to be reared to manhood, alike for his own nation, and for all Europe; and as these things were daily murmured into his aching ears, despite himself he shuddered, and he doubted.

Nevertheless, the measure was one of such vital importance that the king still hesitated; and assured that this hesitation must be concluded by other means than those of persuasion, Madame de Maintenon became convinced that a systematic neglect, and the deprivation of that support which had hitherto been afforded with officious zeal to the dependent monarch, would alone tend to make him conscious of his actual position. In accordance with this cruel policy, therefore, both the Duke du Maine and herself suddenly became silent, serious, and frequently even gloomy; never replying save when they were directly addressed, and then answering only in monosyllables. The great age of the king, and his peculiar position, not permitting him to seek amuse-

ment beyond his own immediate circle, he was consequently condemned to the monotonous routine of music and cards, which was now rendered doubly irksome by the want of that enlivening conversation to which it had hitherto been indebted for its greatest charm; and this privation was the more felt that he was now subjected to it for the first time. The ladies who habitually composed the society of Madame de Maintenon, and who were not in the secret of this new stratagem, strove for a time to raise her spirits, believing them to be depressed by some unacknowledged annoyance; but they soon discovered that their zeal was unwelcome, and, embarrassed by a mystery which they could not fathom, they became in their turn taciturn and ill at ease; and thus the monarch found himself surrounded by an atmosphere of melancholy and constraint, which unnerved his mind, and destroyed his energies.

The Duchess du Maine wielded, moreover, another weapon. When the old king caressed her children, she wept over them; and when he would have made them the companions of his drive, she hurried them away, not daring, as she declared, to exhibit them in public while so dark a stain rested upon their birth. At other times she affected to shrink from collision with the Duchess d'Orleans her sister, who, by her marriage with the nephew of the king, had effaced the stigma of her illegitimacy; and when the aged monarch, heart-wrung and weary, could bear no further pang, Madame de Maintenon soothed him by recalling to his recollection that he had but to will it, and these trials would be terminated for ever.

Louis XIV. sighed for peace; his strength was sapped

by the perpetual murmurs to which he was exposed; and it was at length extorted from him in one of those moments of moral exhaustion, that the children of the Duke du Maine should be created princes of the blood, with all the prerogatives essential to that dignity, especially the privilege of succeeding to the crown in default of a direct and legitimate heir.[1]

But although he suffered this concession to be forced from him, and found the immediate recompense of his compliance in the renewed attentions and gaiety of his little circle, the king was nevertheless dissatisfied with himself; and in reply to the self-gratulatory acknowledgments of the Duchess du Maine, and the equally earnest but more measured thanks of her husband, he answered sadly, and even sharply: "You would have it so; and therefore should you find that after having become great during my life-time, you are reduced to insignificance after my death, remember that it has been your own work; and profit by what I have done should it be in your power."

The chancellor Pontchartrain no sooner ascertained the aim of this last intrigue, than, pretexting his advanced age and failing health, he requested his dismission, which was after some difficulty conceded; and his place supplied by M. Voisin,[2] who was devoted to the interests of Madame de Maintenon and the Duke du Maine. To him had been entrusted the delicate task of bringing the mind of the king to dwell upon a future in which he could bear no part; but it is doubtful that he would have succeeded in his aim, had not the domestic

[1] Louis XIV, sa Cour, et le Regent.

[2] Son of a councillor of state.

persecutions to which we have alluded come in aid of his diplomacy.

Throughout the whole of the transaction the word WILL was never pronounced before Louis XIV; he was entreated only to ensure the observance of his *wishes;* nor was he fatigued even by the summary of these; for he had those about him who prompted every measure, reasoned upon its justice and validity, and combined the whole with a promptitude and sophistry which rendered all his objections of no avail. In vain did he declare that the birth of the Duke d'Orleans entitled him to the regency; he was answered by the suspicion of poison, and the fact of profligacy: and when, with a return of his former pride, he declared that he could not brook that his last wishes should be disregarded, as those of his father had previously been, he was reminded of the vast discrepancy which had existed between Louis XIII. and Louis XIV; and assured that no one would dare to controvert his own pleasure to the end of time.

This avarice of power was the weak point of the monarch; and at length, as we have stated, the victory was obtained. In the last document to which his signature was appended, he established a council of regency, over which the Duke d'Orleans was to preside, to which the Duke de Bourbon was to be called when he should have attained the age of twenty-four, and whose other members were to be the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, the chancellor, four marshals, the like number of secretaries of state, and the comptroller-general.

In this council every measure was to be decided by a

majority of voices, but that of the president was to have weight only when he had the casting vote; while the person of the infant monarch was to be placed under the government of the collective members.

Moreover, the Duke du Maine was entrusted not only with the education, but also with the safe keeping of the young king, with absolute control over the body-guard, and in case of his decease, the same privileges were to descend to the Count de Toulouse; while the Duke-Marshal de Villeroi was appointed governor, under the authority of the Duke du Maine. This arrangement, as will be perceptible at the first glance, left to the Duke d'Orleans no power save what was secured to him by law, while even that was burthened with precautions well calculated to excite his indignation.[1]

The royal will was no sooner completed than it was concealed in a cavity opened in the wall of a tower behind the state-apartment, where it was enclosed within an iron door protected by three different keys; one of which was delivered to the first president of the chambers, a second to the attorney-general, and the third to the public registrar. It was, moreover, accompanied by an edict which forbade it to be opened before the death of the king; and then only in the presence of the assembled parliament, the princes, and the peers.

As Louis XIV. placed these documents in the hands of the president, he said gloomily: "Here is my will. The example of the kings my predecessors, and even that of the king my father, will not allow me to remain in ignorance of what may happen to it; but it has been

[1] Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire Universelle de l'Europe, par le Père d'Avrigny.

solicited; I have been tormented to frame it, and I have been allowed neither peace nor rest till I complied. I have therefore purchased comfort through its means. Take it away. Happen to it what may, at least I shall now be left quiet, and hear no more upon the subject."[1]

This incident will suffice to demonstrate the persecutions to which Louis XIV. was subjected during the later period of his existence; but despite his private annoyances he continued resolutely to hold the helm of government; and the more deeply he became conscious of his physical weakness, the more determined and extraordinary were his efforts to preserve the interests of the state firm and intact.

The last occasion on which Louis XIV. appeared in all the pomp of his regality, was at the reception of Mehemet-Riza-Beg, the *soi-disant* Persian ambassador. The most magnificent preparations were made for the ceremonial of this apocryphal envoy; and the dignified and venerable appearance of the gray-haired but still stately monarch, excited universal comment and admiration. The departure of the ambassador was, however, the signal for renewed monotony; and this brief interval of splendour and representation past, the king resumed his usual habits; occupied himself in forming treaties, and renewing alliances; arranged his papers with scrupulous exactness; burnt such as he did not desire should be made public, and even dictated certain minute details connected with the ceremonial to be observed towards the dauphin.

On the 3rd of May, 1715, Louis XIV. rose at an early hour in order to witness an eclipse of the sun; and

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

having attentively observed it in all its phases, he complained towards the evening of extreme fatigue. Nevertheless he supped in the apartment of the Duchess de Berri, but feeling weary and exhausted, left the table, and immediately retired to bed. A rumour forthwith spread that the king was seriously indisposed; and the report gained ground so rapidly, that the several foreign ambassadors despatched couriers to their respective courts to announce the intelligence; a circumstance which soon reached the ears of the monarch, who, indignant at such indecent precipitancy, and resolved to prove that he was yet superior to the decay on which they had based their faith, commanded that preparations should be forthwith commenced for a grand review of his household troops.

This magnificent exhibition consequently took place on the 20th of June, when, for the last time, the several troops of gendarmes and light horse, in their state uniforms, defiled in front of the terrace of Marly; which they had no sooner done than the monarch appeared at the principal entrance of the palace, habited in the same costume which he had worn in his earlier years; and descending the marble steps, mounted his horse, and remained four hours in the saddle under the eyes of the foreign envoys, who had already announced his approaching death to their sovereigns.

This, however, was the expiring effort of his pride. A short time subsequently the court returned to Versailles; and on the eve of the festival of St. Louis the king dined in public; but his evident exhaustion, and the change which had taken place in his countenance, betrayed the violent struggles to which he had subjected

himself in order to conceal his rapidly approaching decay. The repast had scarcely concluded, when he complained of indisposition; and in another hour he was attacked by fever.

During the whole of the last year it had been the study of Louis XIV. to deceive himself, and, above all, to deceive others, as to the extent of the physical debility induced by his great age. He had risen at a late hour, in order to curtail the fatigues of the day; received his ministers, and even dined, in his bed; and, once having prevailed upon himself to leave it, passed several hours in succession in his cushioned chair. It was in vain that his physician urged upon him the necessity of exercise, in order to counteract his tendency to reverie and somnolency; and equally in vain that he reminded him of the swollen and discoloured state of his feet and ankles; the invalid admitted the justice of his arguments, but the system which he so zealously advocated alarmed the increasing indolence of the monarch, who could not rise from his seat without pain; and would never attempt to do so until all his attendants had left the room, lest they should perceive the state of weakness to which he was reduced.

Great, therefore, had been the two efforts which we have described, where the monarch had for a time conquered the man; and where pride had supplied the place of strength. The only exercise which he ultimately consented to take, was in the magnificent gardens of Versailles, where he was wheeled through the stately avenues which he had himself planted, in a bath-chair; a prey to pain which was visibly depicted upon his countenance, but which he

supported with cold and silent dignity, too haughty to complain. To the last he wore rouge, preserved the symmetry of his figure by artificial means, and even studied to observe the same style of walk and gesture which he had adopted during the elasticity of youth.[1]

Although, as we have shown, the faction of the legitimized princes had succeeded in wresting from Louis XIV. a will favourable to their interests, they were, nevertheless, not suffered to inform themselves of its precise contents, and had consequently only a general impression of its tendency; and so long as the monarch remained in health this imperfect knowledge had sufficed to satisfy them; but they had no sooner ascertained that he was in all probability upon his death-bed, than the Duchess du Maine urged her husband to explain to Madame de Maintenon the vital necessity of their comprehending, not only in its full, but also in its most minute bearings, the whole bent and nature of the document, in order that they might adopt such measures as should appear the most prudent under the circumtances in which they were about to be placed.

This necessity was at once admitted by their counsellor; but when the duke proceeded to entreat that she would obtain the desired information from the monarch, Madame de Maintenon hesitated. To assail his sick-bed with such a request appeared to her a certain method of incurring his displeasure; and she shrank from involving herself in so gratuitous a risk. The urgency of M. du Maine, however, bore down this objection. He declared that at such a moment it would be impossible for the king to have any feeling, save one of tenderness, towards a person of whose devo-

[1] Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

tion he had during so many years had daily and hourly proofs; and at length re-assured by this argument, and unable to resist the pleading of her favourite friend and pupil, she consented to make the attempt.

Skilfully, however, as Madame de Maintenon seized her opportunity, the king was startled by the inquiry. He was conscious that in his tendernessfor his illegitimate children, he had already in a great degree overpassed the boundary of justice; and all that could be extorted from him was his consent to inform them of what they desired to know only on the express condition that they would pledge themselves to keep it a profound secret; and would adopt no measures in consequence.

As the royal compliance was rendered nugatory by these restrictions, the Duke du Maine considered it prudent to decline the confidence, but he ere long repented his decision; and as it was impossible to repair the error, it was next decided that the faction should limit their inquiries to the simple fact of the succession, and entreat the king to inform them whether or not he had decided that it should devolve upon the King of Spain.

This question he answered in the negative; whence they inferred that the Duke d'Orleans must necessarily hold a prominent position, be it what it might, under the regency; yet they declined the advances which, in complete ignorance of the success of the intrigue, he had recently made towards a reconciliation; and even evaded an alliance, at which he more than hinted, between Mademoiselle de Valois, his daughter, and the Prince de Dombes, the elder son of the Duke du Maine. It is true that the king, when it was mooted, showed some disinclination to the proposed marriage, which they made no effort to remove; while the suggestion also involved certain minor

difficulties that were permitted to outweigh its obvious advantages.

To this fault they added another infinitely more serious, by informing the Duke d'Orleans that there was no mention made of Philip V. in the royal will; an assurance which, thanks to their own indiscretion, at once convinced the prince of the stability of his position.

As the fatal indisposition of Louis XIV. progressed, and the extreme languor under which he suffered convinced all around him that he was rapidly drawing near his end, the alarm of the Duchess du Maine augmented; and she once more assailed Madame de Maintenon with entreaties that she would induce the king to speak without reserve, and also to adopt the most stringent measures to ensure to the legitimized princes, beyond all risk of failure, the privileges to which they had attained.

On this occasion, however, Madame de Maintenon met her request with a resolute refusal; and declared her determination to resist every attempt which might be made to disturb and embitter his last moments; and it was consequently freely, and without solicitation, that the monarch ultimately imparted to the Duke du Maine all the clauses of the will. In vain did the bewildered listener expostulate with him upon the difficulties to which he should be exposed by such an arrangement; in vain did he assure him that he had invested him with an authority which, while it was sufficiently great to secure to him the animosity of the Duke d'Orleans, was still too limited to support him against his resentment; the king resisted all his arguments, and persisted in declaring that he would not alter in anywise the arrangements that he had made.[1]

[1] Louis XIV, sa Cour, et le Regent.

There can indeed be little doubt that in the endeavour to aggrandise the Duke du Maine, Louis XIV. had adopted measures eminently calculated to frustrate his object. He might have foreseen that in subjecting his nephew to the trammels of a council of regency, he should, as a natural consequence, excite his indignation, and impel him to attempt every expedient, however extreme, to liberate himself from such a thraldom; and he had long had sufficient experience of the hot and reckless nature of the Duke d'Orleans, whose habit of resisting every intrusion upon his individual privileges was little likely to desert him in a conjuncture which involved alike his power and his pride, not only in his own eyes but in the eyes of all Europe, to have convinced him that the prince would not tamely brook so glaring an affront; nor can his self-delusion, in framing such a will, be explained in any other manner than by the inference, that, having been implicitly obeyed throughout his life, he deemed it impossible that his wishes should be opposed when he was in his grave; forgetting that he had himself disregarded the dying injunctions of his own father.

Return we to the suffering monarch. On the day succeeding his attack, the king declared himself considerably recovered, and commanded a concert, during which the musicians were instructed to play none but cheerful melodies; and they had already ascended the orchestra, when the tapestry hangings of the royal chamber, which had been drawn back, were suddenly closed; and the court physicians were summoned, who declared the condition of the king to be so precarious, that expresses were immediately despatched to his confessor and the Cardinal de Rohan, who both arrived in great haste at a moment when the danger of dissolution appeared so immediate,

that while le Tellier was receiving the confession of his illustrious penitent, the cardinal hurried to the chapel in search of the viaticum, and sent to desire the immediate attendance of the curate with the holy oils.

Two of the king's almoners summoned by the cardinal, a few of the inferior domestics of the palace bearing torches, two of the physician's private servants, and lastly Madame de Maintenon, were all who followed the pyx to the royal chamber, by a private staircase; and not more than a dozen individuals surrounded the dying bed, where the cardinal expatiated to the expiring monarch upon the importance and solemnity of this great and closing ceremony.

The aged king listened firmly, and with an expression of pious devotion; and when he had received the sacrament, and touched the holy oils, all who had been present left the chamber, save the chancellor and Madame de Maintenon; and they had no sooner retired, than a small table was placed beside him, upon which he wrote a few lines comprising a last codicil in favour of the Duke du Maine; and, this done, fell back upon his pillow, in apparent tranquillity.

On the 22d of August mortification had taken place in one of his legs; and the Duke d'Orleans, whose saloons had for some time been totally deserted, found himself suddenly the centre of a brilliant circle; but an empiric, who declared himself capable of renewing the strength of the king with an elixir of which he alone possessed the secret, and who succeeded in inducing his attendants to test its efficacy, having so far renovated him that he was enabled to swallow a small portion of food, and moreover declared that he would in time restore him to health, the crowd by whom the prince had been

surrounded was so materially diminished, that as he glanced round his saloon he said disdainfully; "Let him but make another meal, and I shall find myself alone."

The disease was, however, mortal. This last hope proved fallacious; and the king felt that he was beyond the power of human help. In his extremity he devoted himself entirely to prayer; and his tranquillity was so great that it was attributed to the rash and unmeasured assurances of his confessor. It was asserted that Anne of Austria had on one occasion exhorted him rather to strive to emulate his grand-father than his father; and when he had inquired wherefore, had replied; "Because at the death of Henry IV. the nation wept, but at that of Louis XIII. it smiled." This, however, it was generally conceded, could not be the memory by which his dying pillow was now smoothed; for after a reign of seventy-two years, and an existence of seventy-seven, sullied by the vices of his early life, so many wars recklessly undertaken, so many human lives sacrificed, so many taxes inflicted on an already burthened people, it could not be that the anticipation of the tears and lamentations of his subjects gave him this calm, and taught him to look with fearlessness upon his extinction.

The solution of the enigma was consequently supposed to exist in a report which had for some time been whispered at court, to the effect that a considerable period before his illness, Père le Tellier had induced the king to become a member of the fraternity of the Jesuits, of which he had vaunted the privileges and plenary indulgences; and had even succeeded in persuading him that whatever might be the sins of which he had been guilty, or in whatever impossibility he found himself of making reparation in this world to those whom he might

have injured, the simple fact of his becoming a brother of the Company of Jesus would suffice for his complete exoneration; and infallibly induce his salvation.

Such assurances as these could not, as it was declared, have failed in their effect upon a conscience heavily burdened, and only newly awakened to a sense of its condition; and, accordingly, it was asserted that the king had taken the vows required of him; and instead of the habit of the order, had been invested with a minute sign of his confraternity in the shape of a scapulary, which he wore upon his breast; while certain prayers and pledges which throughout the last days of his existence were exchanged between himself and his confessor, and which, having been partially overheard, were not recognised as the religious exercises commonly used before death, served to confirm the opinion that Louis XIV. was indeed, at that period, a Jesuit.

The Duke de St. Simon, however, even while recording this suspicion, proceeds to throw a doubt upon its truth, by adding, that as his own curiosity was excited upon the subject, he inquired in confidence of Maréchal, the king's principal surgeon, to whom he was much attached, and from whom he had few secrets, if such indeed were the case; when he was positively assured that the report had no foundation whatever; and even detesting le Tellier as he did, Maréchal yet declared that although he was near the king at all hours of the day and night, he had never remarked the use of any particular formulary of prayer or benediction; while, as regarded the adoption of the scapulary, or any other badge, he could positively declare that the king wore nothing about his person save the relics which he had carried for years.

Calm as he appeared, moreover, Louis XIV. nevertheless bitterly expiated upon his death-bed the faults and excesses of his past life. He wept over the profligacy of his youth, which he publicly avowed; deplored the madness of his ambition, by which he had brought mourning into every corner of his kingdom; and expressed the most earnest regret that sufficient time had not been afforded to him, since the termination of the war, to leave to his grandson a flourishing nation and a happy people.

That he had failed to do so was evident throughout his illness. The excessive burthen of taxation, the fluctuating currency, and the discontent of the parliament, which he had subjected to slight and insult throughout the whole duration of a protracted reign, had induced every class of his subjects to look forward with anxiety to its close; while even at court, the wearisomeness and constraint that had prevailed since the deaths of the Duke and Duchess de Bourgoyne diminished, in a very perceptible degree, the anxiety which they would otherwise have undoubtedly evinced.

Some few, however, wept at the prospect of losing their monarch; but these were they who had grown old with him, and must necessarily see themselves thrust aside to make way for a new race; those whose ideas and habits were alike becoming antediluvian; and who could not conceal even from themselves, that they were little fitted to figure in a court, which would be ruled by a dissipated regent, and a king who had not yet attained to boyhood. Not even his successor mourned over the approach of a separation which must be eternal, for he was yet too young to comprehend the extent of the loss to which he was about to be subjected by the failure of

that protection which would have been his best security; while the Duke d'Orleans looked forward to the demise of his almost octagenarian uncle as a release from restraint and mortification.

Nor were the children of Louis XIV.—those children to forward whose worldly interests he had forfeited his own sense of right—more earnest in their grief; the Princess de Conti indeed exhibited sorrow, but it was placid and resigned; the Duchess de Bourbon talked of her affliction, but pursued her intrigues as usual; while the Duchess d'Orleans shed showers of those painless tears which were, with her, ever ready upon any occasion of annoyance or expediency. The Duke du Maine, it is true, struggled to compose a countenance of decent grief, but he wore the mask loosely, and deceived no one; while the Count de Toulouse preserved a cold and undemonstrative deportment which forbade one suspicion of regret.[1]

Madame de Maintenon had at this period reached her eightieth year, and at so advanced an age might have been more readily acquitted, had she suffered her physical weakness to overpower her moral faculties; but such was far from being the case. To her, Louis XIV. was everything on earth; in him her affections, her ambition, and her hope had alike been concentrated; and she appeared to have garnered up all her energies, in order that she might be supported through the fearful trial which was so rapidly approaching. Watchful, anxious, and unwearying, she sat beside the death-pillow of her monarch-husband; he who had loved her well enough for himself, but not sufficiently for his pride—who had readily made her his wife, but who had shrunk from making her his queen.

[1] Mémoires de St. Simon.

"My grief is great;" she said to one who attempted consolation; "but it is calm and unembittered. I shall weep for him often, but my tears will be those of affection rather than regret, for, in the depth of my heart, his truly Christian end will give me joy."[1]

Her watch was frequently shared by the Duke-Marshal de Villeroi, to whom the monarch was greatly attached; and towards the close of his existence, having called him to his side, he said firmly:

"Marshal, I feel that I am dying; when all is over, conduct your new master to Vincennes, and cause my wishes to be observed." Then, having sent to summon the Duke d'Orleans, as the prince approached his bed he made a signal to those who were about him to retire, which they had no sooner done than he conversed with his nephew for a considerable time in so low a voice that no portion of the conversation could be overheard. After his death, however, the duke affirmed that in this last interview, the king had expressed himself in terms of affection and confidence, and had assured him that, by the dispositions contained in his will, he had preserved to him inviolably the rights of his high birth; adding, that should the dauphin not survive to claim the crown, it would become his own; and that under these circumstances he had endeavoured to act with judgment; but that, as it was impossible to foresee the result, should anything have been ill arranged, it would without doubt be remedied.

When the Duke d'Orleans retired, the king desired the presence of the Duke du Maine, with whom he

[1] Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

spoke apart for a shorter period; after which he received the Count de Toulouse; and subsequently the princes of the blood collectively; to whom, however, he addressed merely a few words, and even those were uttered in a sufficiently audible voice to be heard by all who were in attendance.

On the 26th of August, the king dined in his bed, when all were admitted who had the privilege of the *entrées;* and as the attendants were preparing to retire at the close of his repast, he desired them to draw nearer, and then said with emotion:

"Gentlemen, I desire your pardon for the bad example which I have set you. I have greatly to thank you for the manner in which you have served me, as well as for the attachment and fidelity which I have always experienced at your hands. I request from you the same zeal and the same fidelity towards my grandson, in order that your example may induce those of all my other subjects. Farewell, gentlemen; I feel that this parting has affected not only myself, but you also. Forgive me. I trust that you will sometimes think of me when I am gone."

The scene was a touching one: the gray-haired king, half lying, half sitting, in his gorgeous bed, whose velvet hangings, looped back with their heavy ropes and tassels of gold, were the laborious offering of the pupils of St. Cyr, and were wrought with threads of gold and silver, and party-coloured silks, representing in a singular and incongruous mixture the principal passages of the Scriptures, interspersed with the less holy incidents of the heathen mythology; the groups of princes in their gorgeous costumes, dispersed over the vast apartment;

the door opening from the cabinet thronged with courtiers and ladies; and, finally, the court functionaries, who had simultaneously sunk upon their knees as they approached the dying monarch; the gilded cornices, the priceless pictures, the tapestried hangings, the richly carpeted floor, the waste of luxury on every side, the pride of man's intellect, and of man's strength; and in the midst decay and death, a palsied hand, and a dimmed eye.

The most stoical were moved at such a moment; and even when the attendant gentlemen had risen slowly and in silence, and disappeared across the threshold like a procession of shadows, the stillness of the death-room continued for a time unbroken.

It was the voice of the king by which it was at length dispelled. He first informed the Marshal de Villeroi that he had appointed him governor to the dauphin; and then desired that the Duchess de Ventadour would introduce the child who was so soon to become his successor; and the little prince had no sooner knelt upon the cushion which had been placed for him near the side of the bed, still holding the hand of his gouvernante firmly grasped in his own, than the monarch, after gazing upon him for a time with an expression of mingled anxiety and tenderness, said in an impressive voice:

"My child, you are about to become a great king; do not imitate me either in my taste for building, or in my love of war. Endeavour, on the contrary, to live in peace with the neighbouring nations; render to God all that you owe him; and cause his name to be honoured by your subjects. Strive to relieve the burdens of your people, in which I have been unfortunate enough to fail;

and never forget the gratitude that you owe to Madame de Ventadour."[1]

"Madam;" he continued, addressing himself to the duchess; "permit me to embrace the prince."

The dauphin was lifted into his arms; and after he had clasped him fondly to his breast, he said in a less steady voice;

"I bless you, my dear child, with all my heart."

This done, Madame de Ventadour was about to reclaim her charge, but the king did not relax his hold, until, raising his eyes to heaven, he had repeated his solemn benediction.

On the 27th, the king, having commanded all the great dignitaries and officers of the household to meet in his apartment, addressed them in a firm voice, in the presence of Madame de Maintenon and his confessor, saying:

"Gentlemen, I die in the faith and obedience of the Church. I know nothing of the dogmas by which it is divided; I have followed the advice that I received; and have done only what I was desired to do. If I have erred, my guides alone must answer before God, whom I call upon to witness this assertion."

Towards the afternoon Louis XIV. next desired the attendance of the chancellor, to whom he delivered a casket filled with papers, a portion of which he instructed him to burn, giving distinct instructions for the disposal of the remainder; and, in the course of the evening, he sent for M. de Pontchartrain, who still acted as one of the secretaries of state, and when he appeared, said calmly:

[1] Louis XV. caused the last words addressed to him by his royal grandfather to be inscribed on vellum; and it is stated that throughout his life they were attached to the headcloth of his bed.

"So soon as I am dead, you will be good enough to issue an order that my heart may be conveyed to the church of the Jesuits in Paris, and cause it to be placed there precisely in the same manner as that of my deceased father."

Then, after a pause, he continued in a tone of equal placidity:

"When I shall have breathed my last, and that my death has been announced according to custom from the balcony of the state apartment, conduct *the king* to Vincennes. But as it strikes me that Cavoie has never regulated the distribution of the rooms in that castle, where the court have not resided for the last fifty years, in that casket"—(and as he spoke, the dying monarch indicated one with his finger)—"you will find a plan of the apartments of Vincennes; take it, and carry it to the grand marshal of the palace, in order that it may assist him in his arrangements."

The night which succeeded was restless and agitated, and was entirely passed by the monarch in prayer; and on the morning of the 28th, immediately that he awoke, the physicians proposed to amputate the leg in which mortification had commenced.

"Will the operation prolong my life?" was the composed inquiry.

"Yes, Sire;" replied the head surgeon; "certainly for several days; and perhaps even for several weeks."

"If that be all," said Louis XIV, "the result will not be adequate to the suffering; God's will be done!"

On the morning of the 30th, the strength of the king was nearly exhausted.

"All is well nigh over;" he said feebly to the Marshal

de Villeroi, who stood at his bedside; "farewell, my friend, we must soon part."

The courage of the dying monarch never forsook him for an instant, neither did he exhibit the slightest emotion. He took leave of every member of his family with a dry eye and a steady voice, merely exhorting them to live, if possible, on terms of friendship, to do their duty to the young king, and to conduct themselves in a Christian spirit; nor was it until the princes and princesses had withdrawn, that he at length betrayed a slight degree of feeling as he turned towards Madame de Maintenon, saying:

"At this moment I only regret yourself. I have not made you happy, but I have ever felt for you all the regard and affection which you deserved. My only consolation in leaving you;" he added, as he grasped her hand, and gazed fixedly upon her with his dim and failing eyes; "exists in the hope that we shall ere long meet again in eternity."

Madame de Maintenon made no rejoinder, but she soon after rose to leave the apartment; and as she crossed the threshold, exclaimed as if unconsciously; "A pretty rendezvous he has given me! That man has never loved any one but himself." And this equally imprudent and ill-timed ejaculation was overheard by the king's apothecary, by whom it was repeated.[1]

As she retired, the king saw in an opposite mirror the reflection of two of his valets de chambre, who were weeping bitterly. "Why do you shed tears?" he asked; "Did you then imagine that I was immortal? As for

[1] Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

myself, I never believed that such was the case; and you should have been prepared, at my age, to lose me long ago."

After a time the king exhibited extreme uneasiness at the absence of Madame de Maintenon, who, believing that all would shortly be over, had already departed for St. Cyr; but having been informed that her presence was required, she excused herself when she re-appeared by stating, that she had been uniting her prayers for his recovery with those of her pupils. On the 30th, however, the intellect of the monarch had become so much impaired that she again left his side, and retired to her own apartment, whither she was followed, to her extreme annoyance, by the captain of the body-guard. Her first care was to lock some papers, which she selected from among others in a bureau, into a small casket, in order to remove them; but this measure was resolutely opposed by M. de Cavoie, who informed her that he had received an order from the Duke d'Orleans to take possession of all the papers in the apartments frequented by the king. "Shall I at least be permitted, Sir," she asked, after an instant of indignant silence; "to remove my furniture?"

"Everything, Madam;" was the reply; "save what is the property of the crown."

"The orders with which you have been entrusted, Sir;" said Madame de Maintenon, more and more incensed; "are somewhat bold; the king is not yet dead; and if Providence should see fit to restore him to us, you may have cause to regret their so stringent execution."

"If Providence should indeed prolong the life of His Majesty, Madam;" answered M. de Cavoie, with a profound bow; "we must hope that he will recognise his

real friends, and approve the conduct they have pursued." And then, after a brief pause, he added; "If you wish to return to the king's chamber you are at liberty to do so; but if not, I have orders to accompany you to St. Cyr."

Madame de Maintenon started; and then, without vouchsafing any reply, she hastily divided her furniture among her servants, and departed for St. Cyr under the escort of Cavoie.

Once during the illness of the monarch he had been betrayed into the expression, "When I was king;" and the scene which we have just described proved that he had not been premature in separating the present from the past.

On arriving at the convent, Madame de Maintenon was instantly made conscious by the altered manner of the superior, that although the monarch had not yet expired, her own reign was over. "Sir;" demanded the abbess of M. de Cavoie, when she had greeted her visitor with a cold and distant bow; "shall I not compromise myself and my community by receiving Madame de Maintenon without the permission of the Duke d'Orleans?"

"Madam;" exclaimed the captain of the guard with generous indignation; "have you then forgotten that Madame de Maintenon was the foundress of this house?"

M. de Cavoie had no sooner retired than the widowed favourite desired that her pupils might be sent to her; and as they appeared, she said emphatically; "Henceforth I will belong wholly to my God, and my children;" and then turning towards one of the nuns to whom she was much attached, she added; "I have seen the king meet his death like a saint and a hero; I have quitted a world

I never loved; and I am in a retreat which is most dear to me. I wish with all my heart that others were as happy as myself." Even at this bitter crisis the consummate tact and self-control of Madame de Maintenon did not abandon her.

The following day was one of agony to the expiring king. His intervals of consciousness were rare and brief. The mortification extended rapidly; and towards mid-day his condition became so much exasperated that it was found necessary to perform the service for the dying without further delay. The mournful ceremony aroused him from his lethargy; and the surprise was general when his voice was once more heard audibly and clearly, combined with those of the priests. At the termination of the prayers he moreover recognised the Cardinal de Rohan, and said calmly; "These are the last favours of the Church."

He then repeated several times; "*Nunc et in horâ mortis:*" and finally he exclaimed with earnest fervour; "Oh, my God, come to my aid, and hasten to help me!"

He never spoke again; for as these words escaped him he once more fell back insensible upon his pillow; and throughout the night continued unconscious of everything save bodily suffering.

At eight o'clock on the following morning Louis XIV. expired. As he exhaled his last sigh, a man was seen to approach a window of the state apartment which opened on the great balcony, and throw it suddenly back. It was the captain of the body-guard, who had no sooner attracted the attention of the populace, by whom the court-yard was thronged in expectation of the tidings

which they knew could not be long delayed, than raising his truncheon above his head, he broke it in the centre, and throwing the pieces among the crowd exclaimed in a loud voice; "The king is dead!" Then seizing another staff from an attendant, without the pause of an instant, he flourished it in the air as he shouted; "Long live the king!"

And a multitudinous echo from the depths of the lately deserted apartment answered as buoyantly; "Long live the king!"

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